

BONUS! PULL-OUT HOLIDAY BUYER'S GUIDE INSIDE!

Volume 4 • Issue 1 • December 1998

PS *Extreme*

THE PLAYER'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION



Atlus' 2D powerhouse
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Tecmo's "Nightmare Before Christmas"



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— FIA Sporting regulations

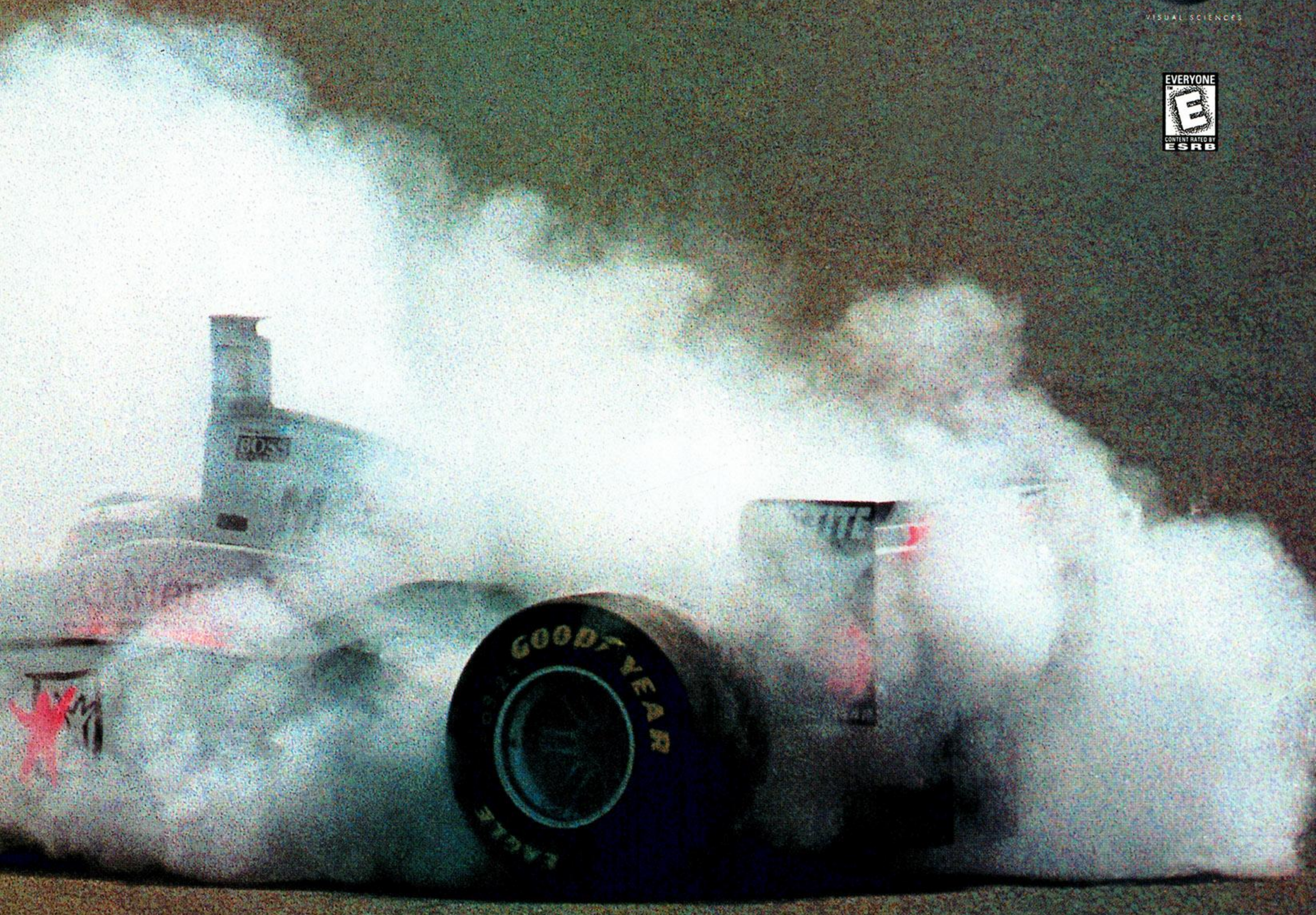
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- EXnews:** p18
All about Namco, Capcom forsakes, Odd Oscar, Sony's Personal Digital Pocket Pal (PDPP), and much, much more!
- EXcessory:** p24
A full bevy of goodies inspected this month.
- EXecute:** p32
More codes, cheats, tips, hints and eggs.
- EXclusive:** p36
Amazing info on upcoming kids games, plus other things.
- EXtreme:** p48
Tecmo's Kagero. It's a tasty greek sandwich made from lamb, served with tomatoes and onions on a pita. Mmmmm.
- EXpecting:** p52
We've got four huge pages, packed with eight huge games, wrapped in one huge issue, made by several huge people.
- SPorts:** p63
More sports games. We love the sports games. What can we say? If it's sports, it's gonna be here.
- EXrated:** p80
All the ratings can be found here with nice orange backgrounds.
- EXcerpt:** p116
A candid conversation with the producer of A Bug's Life.
- EXcavate:** p118
It's the holiday season again, so we decided to feature some old, cheap games for all us folks limited budgets.

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I thought I'd take the editorial space this month to wish everyone a great holiday vacation. Hopefully, you'll be spending those cherished days off from school and work doing nothing but playing some of the great PlayStation games that were delivered under your tree, courtesy of "Santa", for being such good boys and girls. In order to help St. Nick make all of those tough buying decisions, we've gone and produced our second-annual Holiday Buyer's Guide, which is loosely glued and bound into the magazine, so it can be pulled out and taken to your local game retailer. Inside it, you'll find our recommendations for the year's best games, listed in their respective categories, along with their ratings and the issues they appeared in. There's even a handy-dandy, user-friendly list in the back, just in case your parents (or significant others) don't know the difference between Punky Skunk and Crash Bandicoot 3.

As usual, we've packed the issue with plenty of other goodies, from EXclusives on Activision's Quake II, 989 Studios' Syphon Filter and THQ's Shao Lin, to a feature on some of the children's software that is starting to trickle onto the PlayStation. This is a sure sign that the hardware is rounding the corner to hitting "mass market" status. I wouldn't be too surprised if we see another price drop mid-next year.

As far as the cover story goes, sure Kagero: Deception 2 might have been more suitable for a Halloween issue, but the game is so good that we couldn't not put it on the cover. Tecmo has delivered an intriguing and devilishly fun action/strategy game and, while it's not quite suitable for the toddlers in the house, it is yet another great reason why you should be happy that you own the best video game system ever created.

While you'll probably be reading this issue around Thanksgiving, we are already hard at work planning-out next year's issues. Our loyal readers might have noticed that we're all about gradual change — shaping and evolving the magazine as we go along vs. "exciting new redesigns" every six months or so. We feel we have some great ideas for '99, and you'll see them implemented over the coming months. Feel free to email me at the address below, or send us a letter if you have any suggestions or comments, they will all be taken to heart — this is your magazine too.

Again, have a great holiday, don't gorge yourself on too much turkey and ham, try and get outside a little bit (it's not healthy to play Metal Gear for hours on end), and we'll see you in thirty.

GREG
OFF@QUAKE.NET

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Dear PSExtreme,

Hey! Butt kissin' time y'all!!! First off. Excellent mag!!! The best PlayStation magazine out there. I have a subscription to many, many mags and this is the best. To think I would have never even heard of this mag if I hadn't won some Ascii contest!

Ok... question time.

I am quite sure some of these have been answered alotta times before. But I must ask because I might have not caught it. I know you hate lists, so for your reading pleasure I made a short story with my questions in it :) There will be a * in front of every question. "Oh boy!" shouted Billy! "PSExtreme just came in the mail!" He shouted as he ran off to the bathroom (the only place he could get some privacy from his ten brothers and sisters) locking the door behind him.

He enthusiastically opened the first page, looking at the hypnotic advertisements that seem to catch the eye for no apparent reason. "All right! The Final Fantasy VIII demo is out" he said to himself while reading an article on FF8. Then he suddenly looked down and saw, "demo not out in the US". "Oh no." Billy said. * "I wonder when the FF8 demo will come to the US? * And which game will it come with? I just love RPG's and can't wait! Hmmm... That reminds me. * I heard that Xeno Gears was gonna have the same beautiful cinematics like in FF7, and the cartoon Anime style ones too. I wonder if this is true?"

"Billy! Get out of the bathroom! You have been in there for an hour! You constipated or something?" Billy's sister Agnis shouted.

Billy knew she could beat him up, so he closed the magazine and ran out of the bathroom to his bedroom, then ran into the closet and closed it, grabbing a flashlight off the top shelf. He opened the magazine once again, praying for no more interruptions. The young boy flipped to the preview page for Metal Gear Solid, full of excitement being that he loved the original. * I wonder how many CD's there are with Metal Gear Solid? * And how many hours of cinematics are there?

Just then, Billy's brother Jimbo opened the closet door and remarked, "Oh

man! I don't even wanna know what you are doing in the closet! Oh my god! With a magazine!? Disgusting!". With that, Jimbo grabbed the magazine, immediately ran out of the room faster than Billy. When Billy caught up with him, Jimbo had some scissors and was cutting away at the magazine. Being he was so much taller than Billy, the shreds of paper fell on Billy's head. I finally gave up after ten minutes of torment and walked away to his room to write a letter asking PSExtreme the questions he had pondered.

A YEAR LATER

Billy was searching his brother's room for a toy he had lost... When he lifted up his brother's mattress he found his lost, and supposedly cut up, PSExtreme magazine. He opened it up and found a bookmarked page, which happened to be a preview of Tomb Raider 3. He looked at it and noticed a big heart circled around Lara Croft. The End

The Moral: Don't let your horny older brother steal your magazine.

Thank you for your time and I really hope this is published in your magazine!

Thanx a lot,
Jeff Perez

There was once a kid with a horny older brother who had the hots for Lara Croft. This brother was so horny for Lara that he decided to secretly order his own subscription to the one magazine that brought him the best coverage of Lara... PSExtreme. He sent away his payment and waited... hoping his little brother Billy wouldn't find out he had a subscription. That little wiener Billy liked to run off with the magazine to places he thought nobody would bug him.

Finally the older brother's first issue arrived in the mail. Joy! More Lara inside! Not only that, but he also read all the great info about the Final Fantasy VIII demo found on the Brave Fencer Musashi disc and about how Xeno Gears has two or three Anime style intermissions, with the rest being in-game cut screens. He also found out that Metal Gear Solid will fill two CD's and will have about 1.5 hours worth of cinematics. Whoa! No

wonder Billy always tries to hog this awesome 'zine!, he thinks to himself, as he hides his issue right where Billy would never think to look...

Dear PSExtreme,

In your latest issue, you have a review of Resident Evil DC and Resident Evil 2 Dual Shock Versions. In there, you indicate that both titles are available now and that the new dual shock DC is now part of the Greatest Hits line at \$19.99. I inquired at my local Electronics Boutique and they claimed to have no release information on either the DC or RE2 Dual Shock versions. They told me that early next year is a likely release date for both of these titles.

Can you help me with any information from Capcom? Their website is pretty out of date, still listing the original DC for \$44.99. Any info would be appreciated.

Thanks!
Gene Porochniak

Those should both be available sometime in November. Check your store again.

Dear PSExtreme,

I am not going to do a lot of kissing up in this letter and tell you guys what you already know. So to the point. On your web site you have NFL BLITZ release date as 9-30-98, however my friend bought the game on 9-10-98. Now, does this mean that different places in the country have different release dates and you guys are only informed of one date. If this is true, all of the people that have to wait until 9-30-98 are missing out on the greatest football game to hit the PlayStation. I was just wondering.

Thanks,
Geoff

No, there aren't different release dates for different parts of the country. The date on our web page was simply the date we were given by the publisher. There are a dozen factors that can change the date a game comes out. You have to take these dates with a grain of salt. This is exactly the reason we don't have a release date list in our magazine. They're NEVER



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— Chip & Jonathan Carter,
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accurate. With the web site, we can update the lists as new dates come in, but, with the magazine, once it's printed, there's no changing anything. We'd rather not look foolish when we have no control over these things.

Dear PSExtreme,

Anyway, let me make the obligatory gestures of goodwill: you guys DO have an awesome magazine. I picked up my first issue of PSExtreme last Friday, mainly because of some of the ads and short articles I saw (especially Tai Fu and Tenchu Stealth Assassins). Needless to say, I was impressed. You guys obviously know your stuff and are well-connected in the industry. Which brings me to my question(s): I heard from a friend that Capcom is releasing Capcom v. Marvel for the PSX. Is this true? What happened to Marvel v. Street Fighter? Decided not to after X-Men V. Street Fighter's less than enthusiastic reception I'd imagine. Also: is there a difference between X-Men V. SF and X-Men v. SF EX? Were they both released for the PSX?

I know this is kind of like, 'question overload,' but if you could respond, it would be greatly appreciated.

Ninja Dave

Yes, Capcom will be releasing Capcom vs. Marvel on the PSX. Marvel vs. SF just didn't get the attention it needed to spend the time porting it to the PlayStation. The PlayStation version of X-Men vs. SF was called EX because they couldn't get some of the arcade features in — due to hardware limits on the PSX. They made the gameplay a little more like EX+ alpha... a little faster and a little easier to do supers.

Dear PSExtreme,

Why did you fire this "Toolie" code character in the last issue? I get some of the best codes from him. For instance, if it wasn't for him, I would have never found that one Rascal House code. I looked everywhere on the internet and all of my magazines and did not find it. I was going to give up

when I finally found it. Please hire him back.

Anonymous

Awww, that's so touching! We didn't think Toolie's efforts were appreciated. Okay, he's re-hired, but on a probationary basis. Hear that Toolie? You better not mess this up again! People need you!

Dear PSExtreme,

I have three questions I need to ask you, and they should be easy to answer.

1. I heard that there's going to be a "Duke Nukem" movie. Is that true?
2. Did you really fire Toolie? Your cheats man? Because if so... good, 'cause not only did the All Weapons code in "Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown" not work, but the Invincibility in "Deathtrap Dungeon" didn't work either.
3. I heard there's going to be a "Quake 2" for PlayStation, is that true?

Yours truly,

Matthew "Iron Finger" Price

**1. Yeppers. See last issue.
2. Ohhhhh Toolie!! We just hired him back and already more complaints. Should we keep him or not, people?!
3. Yessir! See this issue's EXCLUSIVE section for the low-down.**

Dear PSExtreme,

I read your magazine for the first time starting with the September 1998 issue. I was shocked to find out how in-depth you go into the PlayStation market. It was unlike any other magazine I've seen or read before, and only five bucks! Furthermore, the Indiana Jones games looks awesome. Metal Gear Solid — can't wait 'til it hits the shelves. For the serious part, I'm tired of the Government telling us what not to view and what not to buy. Again, yes, parents should be the ones who control their own lives and put the smack down on what they will let their kids view and buy. Games like Resident Evil and the up coming game Thrill Kill... these games are real life (except for the monsters, zombies, and junk

like that). People have to deal with it. In the real world it's "kill or be killed," like the saying goes "The Survival of the Fittest". Kids have to understand parents won't be around 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and that these games are only made to entertain people. If a person has God and a strong mind this will just be another cool game to play. Kids, remember, if the parents don't like what I have to say, they only want what is best for you. Enough of me talking. Give me your views on the game Thrill Kill and the remarks of the young society. Also, I remind you, these games usually sell very well.

Kevin Wyler

Well, we sorta got what you're trying to say... kinda. Well... ummm... Peace brother! Thrill Kill got canceled... too much pointless violence. Ironic, huh?

Dear PSExtreme,

This month, on September 29th, I am having a birthday!!! I was wondering if one of the people who work there could come to our house down in Montana. I have gotten your magazine for about a year now, and think it kicks butt, man!

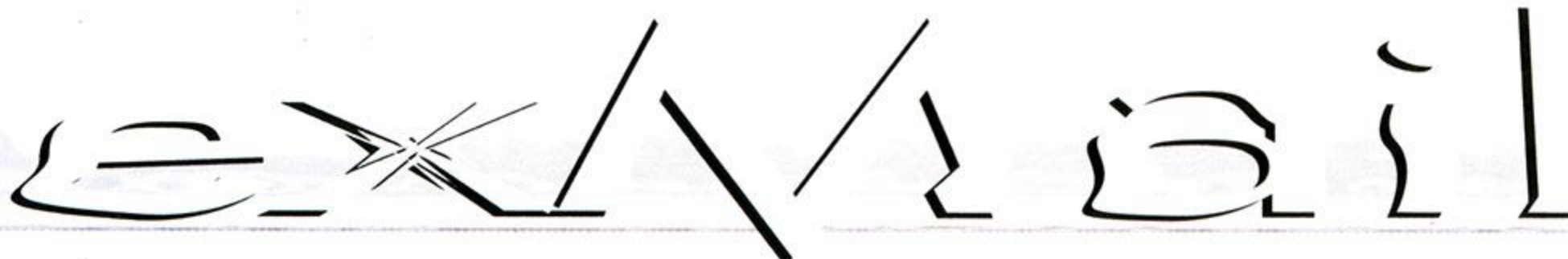
Sincerely your mag kicks butt!
Madimir Alixander Perga
10 years old

You are so kind to invite one of us to your birthday! We regret that we were all too busy making the magazine for a trip to Montana. We hope a free trial subscription to PSExtreme will make up for it. Happy 10th Birthday and enjoy the magazine!

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THE 5 STAGES OF MR. DOMINO ADDICTION

As reported by OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE



1. CONFUSION

("What the hell is that...?")

2. CONDESCENSION

("heh heh. What a silly little game...")

3. DENIAL

("I'm only playing until the next level.")

4. ADDICTION

("I'm only playing until I get to the next level
—and this time I mean it. DO YOU HEAR
ME MR. DOMINO?!? ONLY ONE MORE!!!")

5. ACCEPTANCE

("I love you Mr. Domino.")



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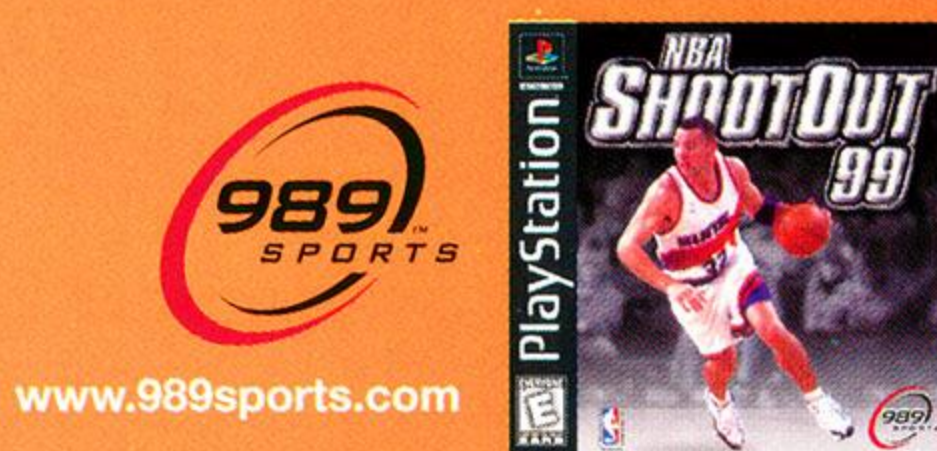
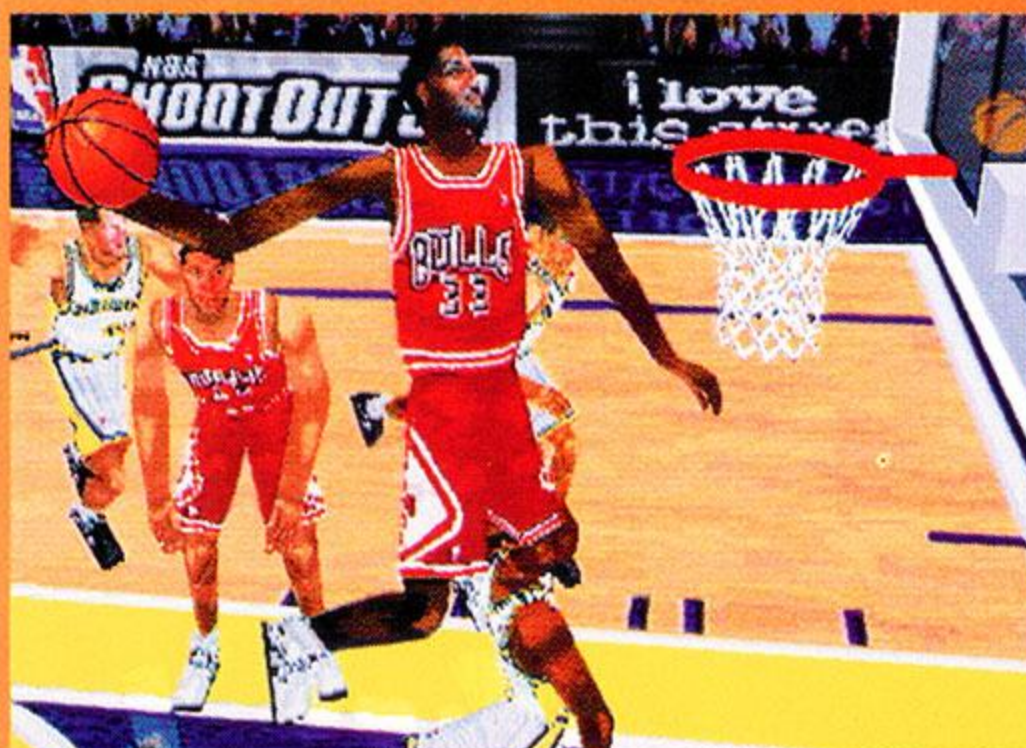
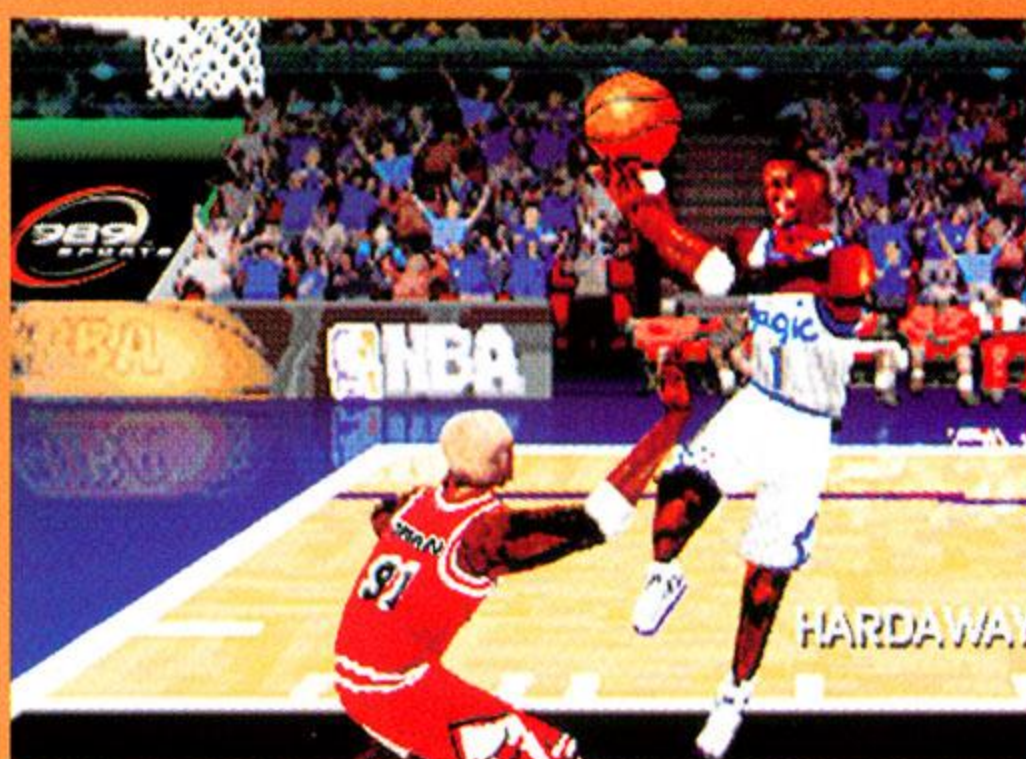
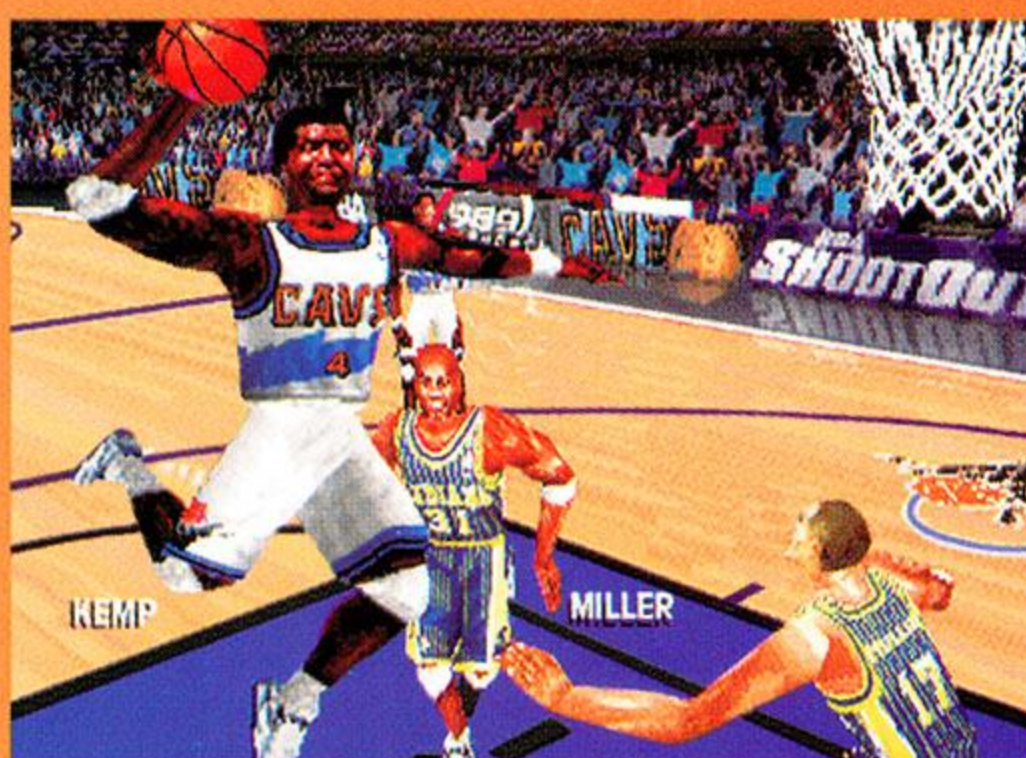


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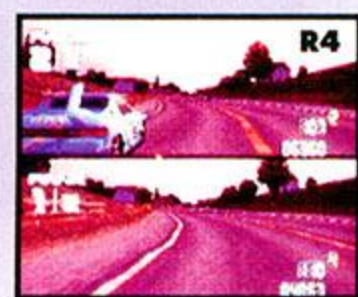
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PlayStation Gaming News

NAMCO & PLAYSTATION '99

While recent announcements of Namco supporting Dreamcast might have disturbed some loyal PlayStation fans, Namco is certainly not abandoning the system they helped get off the ground back in September of '95. Looking forward to 1999, they still have quite a few PS tricks up their sleeve. In addition to the upcoming Pac-Man 3D, they've announced two new titles for next



Ridge Racer 4

year. The first, R4: Ridge Racer Type 4, is the fourth in the successful, long-running series. It's said to have over 300 cars, eight tracks and drop-dead visuals — giving Gran Turismo a serious run for its money. In addition to utilizing the often-overlooked link cable for two and four multiplayer racing, Namco has created their own racing peripheral (anyone remember the Negcon?) called the Jogcon, which has a round, rotatable disc set in the middle — used like a steering wheel. As with Time Crisis and the Guncon, it's rumored that R4 won't be compatible with the Analog thumbsticks on the Dual Shock controller and will only use the Dual Shock vibration feature. If this is the case, let's hope they decide to pack in the Jogcon with the US release of the game. While R4 is set to ship this December in Japan, there is no official US launch date. In addition, Namco recently announced an action/RPG by the title of Dragon Valor. In the game, players will travel through richly detailed 3D environments, seeking out and battling dragons. Set in a fantasy world, Dragon Valor will offer arcade-style one-on-one battles, an intriguing storyline spanning many generations, multiple endings dependent on the choices you make during your quest, and a host of challenging puzzles to solve. Dragon Valor does not have an official US release date, as well, but will most likely show up sometime during the second quarter next year.



Namco's Jogcon



Dragon Valor

WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN US CAPCOM?

Actually, they haven't. Yes, it is true that Capcom recently announced at the Tokyo Game Show that a new Resident Evil would be coming out for Sega's Dreamcast titled "Resident Evil: Code Veronica," but they also announced that PlayStation fans "would be disappointed in a very good way" regarding the next version of Res. Evil for the PS. Unfortunately, that is

the only official statement regarding the next version for the PlayStation, which will most likely be a completely new storyline due to the fact that the Dreamcast version will take off where RE2 left off. More on this to come...

ODDLY ENOUGH, THE WINNER IS...

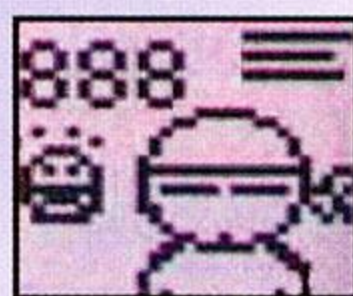
This year's Academy Awards will be host to an unprecedented event — the first time an animated short derived from video game footage will be entered for consideration to compete for an Oscar. The footage in question follows the adventures of Abe, as he attempts to shut down production at the SoulStorm Brewery (which is the plot of the upcoming sequel, Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus). Produced by Oddworld Inhabitants, a group of talented individuals who come from the film and special effects industries, the short film was shown in Los Angeles only for a brief engagement in October at the Laemelle theater chain.

PDA = POCKETSTATION

The latest PDA announcement comes from the Tokyo Game Show. First off, the PDA has been officially named "PocketStation" and will be shipping to Japanese retailers on Japan 23rd for a paltry 3,000 Yen (approximately 25 US bucks). In addition to its previously reported specs and capabilities, it was also revealed that the PocketStation will work as a memory card as well. Here's a short list of the specs: a programmable 32-bit RISC processor together with a liquid crystal display, a small speaker and bi-directional, infrared communication abilities. The PocketStation will also come with a built-in clock and calendar function and users will be able to use applications that utilize flow of time or change of season in conjunction with appropriate software (for both the unit and the PlayStation). Already several new developers have either signed-on or have shown interest in creating



PocketStation



Go! Pirates

games compatible with the unit, including Square, Enix, Koei, Jaleco, Taito, Tomy, Capcom, Art Dink and RiverhillSoft, as well as Tecmo, Konami, Namco, and Hudson (as reported in Japan's



Weekly Famitsu Magazine).

Shown is a screen of Go! Pirates, one of the first PocketStation titles to be released this December by Art Dink. In this simulation RPG, you will be able to cultivate and strengthen your pirates, then pit them in battle against a friend.

BUST A GROOVE — US OR BUST?

In one of the quickest turn arounds ever in the video game industry, 989 first issued a press release with an obscure sentence regarding the cancellation of their much-anticipated Parappa-esque dancing game, "Bust a Groove" which was developed by Enix and released in Japan last year. Then, just a few days later, after presumably a deluge of flames from the internet community, whatever issues there were regarding the cancellation of the product were resolved and 989 put the game back on the upcoming release list. As it stands, it looks like the game will be delayed by a month or so, and might not ship until after the holiday season.

STARCON HEADS BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Not happy with the direction and progress the game was taking, Accolade has decided to shelve the StarCon project and reevaluate what they want to do with the license and concept. While not a total cancellation, it's most likely Star Control fans won't see another version until late 1999.

RAINBOW SIX PSX

Rainbow Six, a recent tactical combat game released for the PC back in September, is headed for the PlayStation, courtesy of Take 2, sometime in mid '99. For those of you not familiar with the game, Rainbow Six was developed by Red Storm — a company formed by best-selling espionage thriller author Tom Clancy — and mixes first person elements of Quake-style games with intense strategy.

PS

EX NEWS

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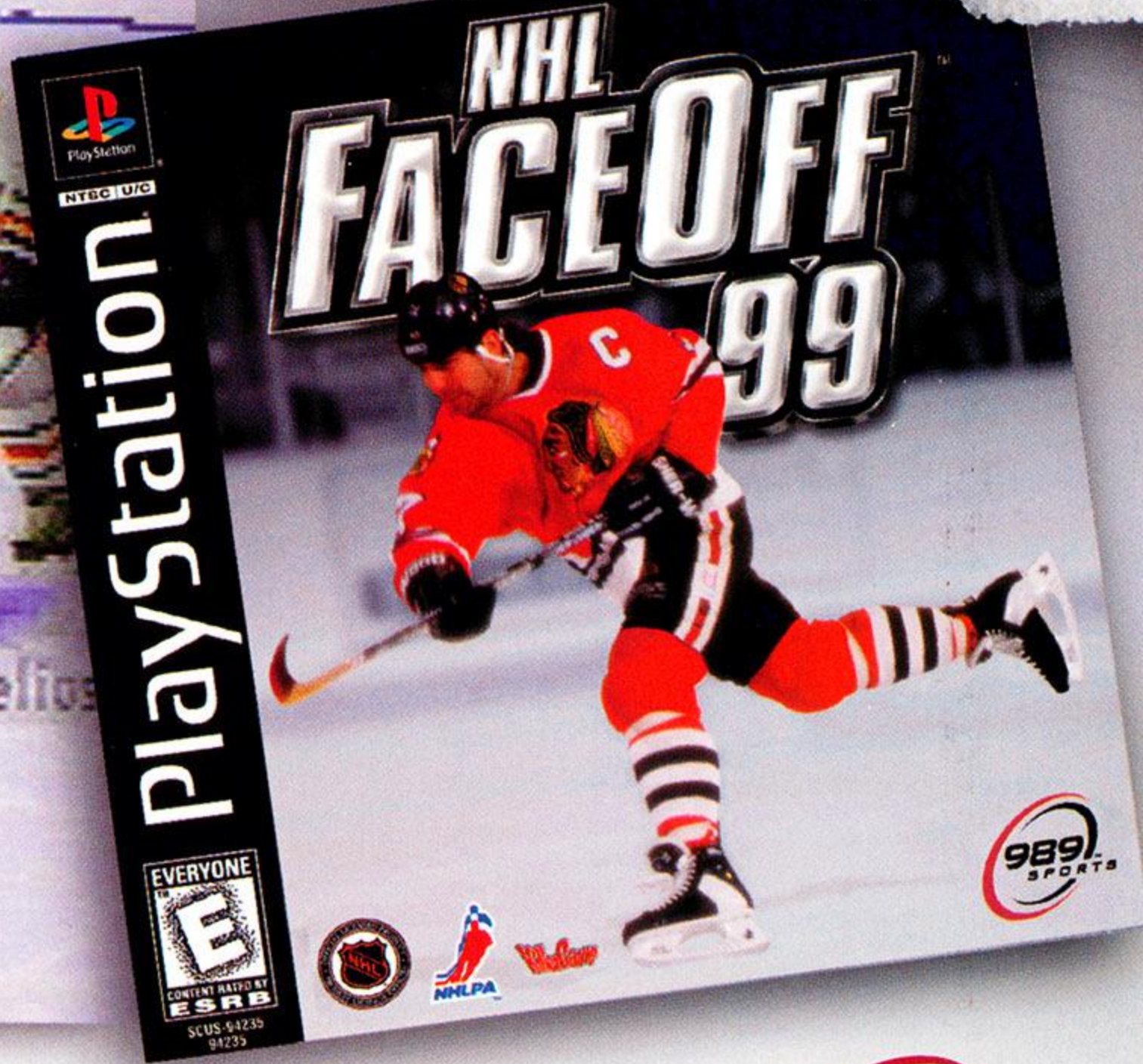
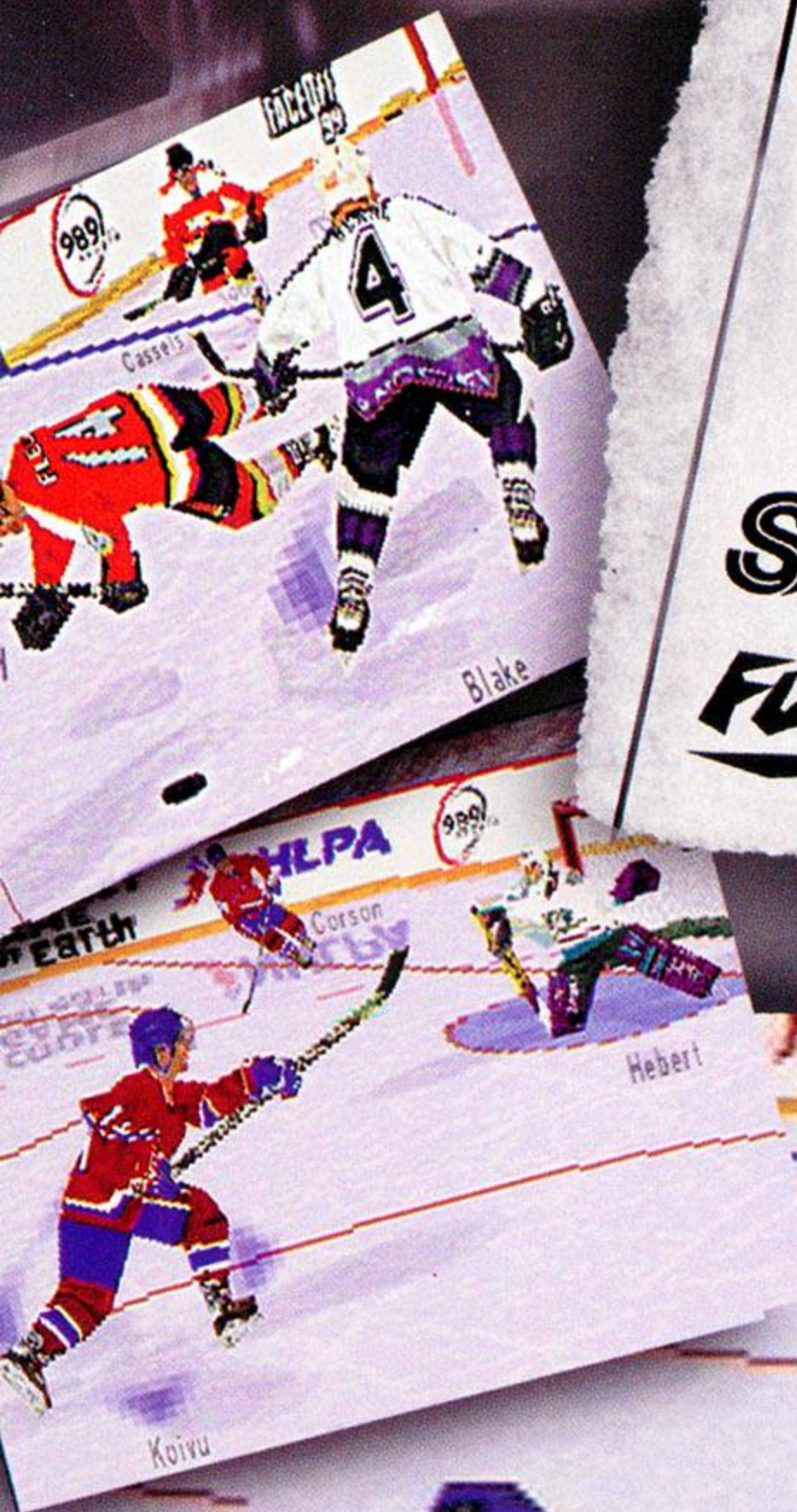
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PlayStation Gaming News



BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION TITLES RANKED ON UNIT SALES AUGUST 1998

EA's Madden NFL 99  1 last month 4 average retail price \$41 	989 Studios' NFL Gameday 99  2 last month 6 average retail price \$40 	Squaresoft's Parasite Eve  3 last month ** average retail price \$49 	Acclaim's WWF WarZone  4 last month 1 average retail price \$42 	Sony's Crash Bandicoot 2  5 last month ** average retail price \$21 
Midway's NFL Blitz  6 last month ** average retail price \$42 	Sony's Gran Turismo  7 last month 3 average retail price \$41 	Sony's Spyro the Dragon  8 last month ** average retail price \$40 	989 Studios' Twisted Metal 2  9 last month ** average retail price \$21 	EA's NCAA Football 99  10 last month 9 average retail price \$21 

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service
 900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050
 (516) 625-2294

** Not in Top 10 Last Month

The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.

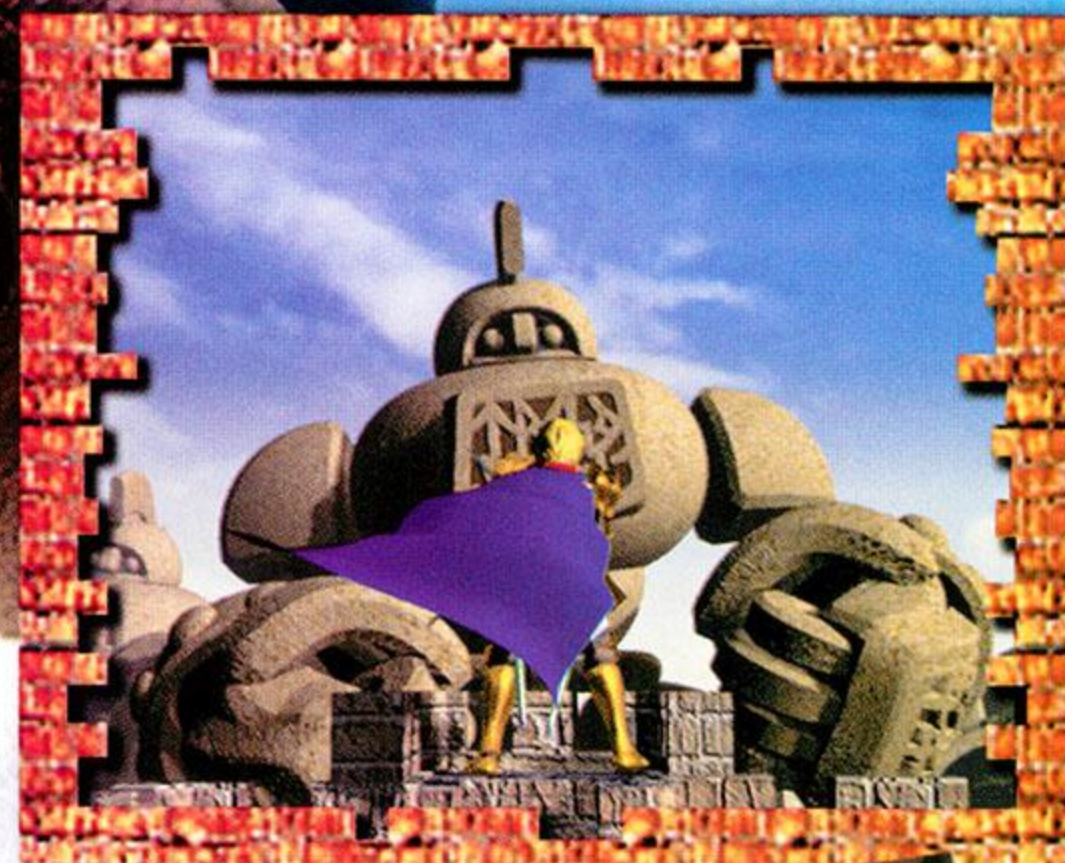
EX NEWS

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CLASSIC TRACKBALL — NYKO — \$49.95

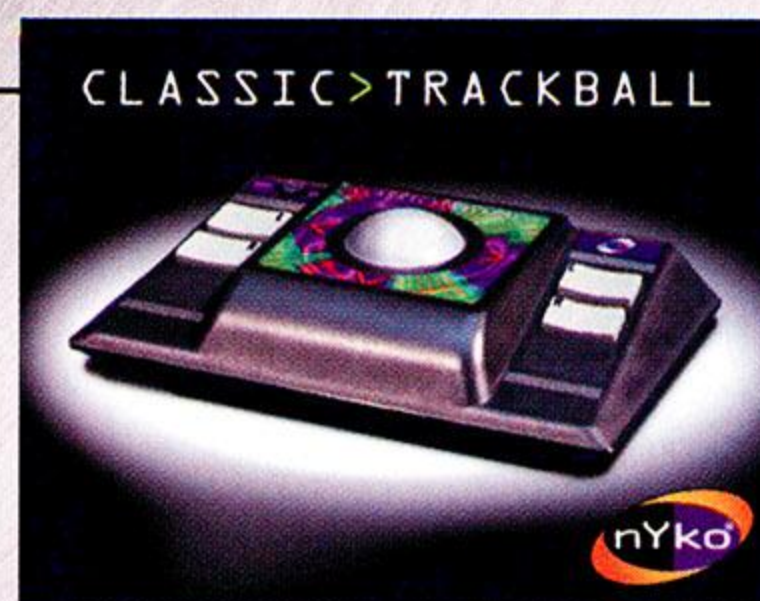
Until now, fans of arcade games on the PlayStation — especially those games which used a trackball in their original coin-op version — have had to settle for using a mouse. The drawback of a mouse, of course, is that you need a surface to glide it across and it isn't something that you can easily hold in your lap.

NYKO has come to our rescue with its "Classic Trackball." Designed to work with all mouse compatible games, the unit consists of a roller ball with two fire buttons per side and a turbo fire feature. As with the mouse, a regular controller needs to be plugged into the second port in order to use the start and select buttons. In addition, the trackball's sensitivity has to be adjusted within each game. While this may seem tedious, it allows you to fine-tune the controller to your preference and the settings can be saved to the memory card in most games.

Reviewing this controller wasn't easy. How can I compare the trackball to anything when it is the only one of its kind? In the end, I just decided to compare it to my wildest expectations. It doesn't feel as solid and the ball does not spin as freely as a coin-op trackball. On the other hand, a coin-op trackball assembly costs a heck of a lot more. I'd also prefer a little more resistance or spring to the fire buttons. Finally, it did not work as well as expected with my favorite trackball game of all-time — Centipede — despite adjusting the sensitivity. To be fair, the mouse doesn't work that great with Centipede either, and Millipede fares better, so perhaps a software issue is involved. The trackball worked just fine with the majority of games found in Midway's "Arcade's Greatest Hits: Atari" compilations — Marble Madness, Crystal Castles, and Missile Command as well as the paddle games Tempest and Super Breakout.



As someone who has begged for a PlayStation trackball ever since Digital Eclipse started emulating classic coin-ops, I've got to give NYKO credit for bringing such a specialized controller to market. If you're trying to capture the feel of the arcade, you can't do any better than this! Put away that PlayStation mouse and the pad to put it on—they are now obsolete. This trackball is easier than a mouse for use with point-and-click games such as Discworld II, Monopoly, Riven, and Command and Conquer. The upcoming Centipede game from Hasbro will also be compatible with this new controller. As was the case with the dual shock analog, perhaps the release of NYKO's trackball will encourage other developers to offer trackball support as an option in future games. Perhaps it may even encourage the development of specialized software, such as educational programs, that could take advantage of such a unique controller.



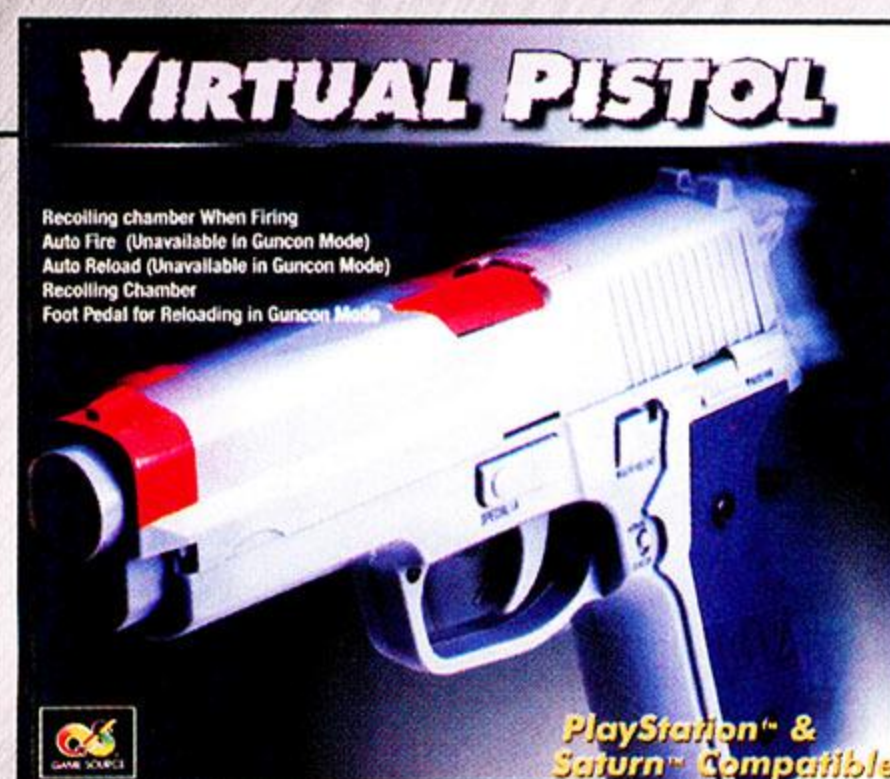
VIRTUAL PISTOL — GAME SOURCE — \$49.95

The PlayStation probably has more light guns available for it than any other system in history, which is odd since there aren't that many games that utilize them. The latest is the Virtual Pistol from Game Source. You'll immediately notice that it looks more like a real gun— without the usual light gun barrel which is thicker (and heavier) than the grip. It feels more comfortable than most light guns, although I prefer a little more feedback from the trigger itself. The Virtual Pistol has a few options, such as auto fire and auto reload, and it has a switch to allow for Guncon compatibility.

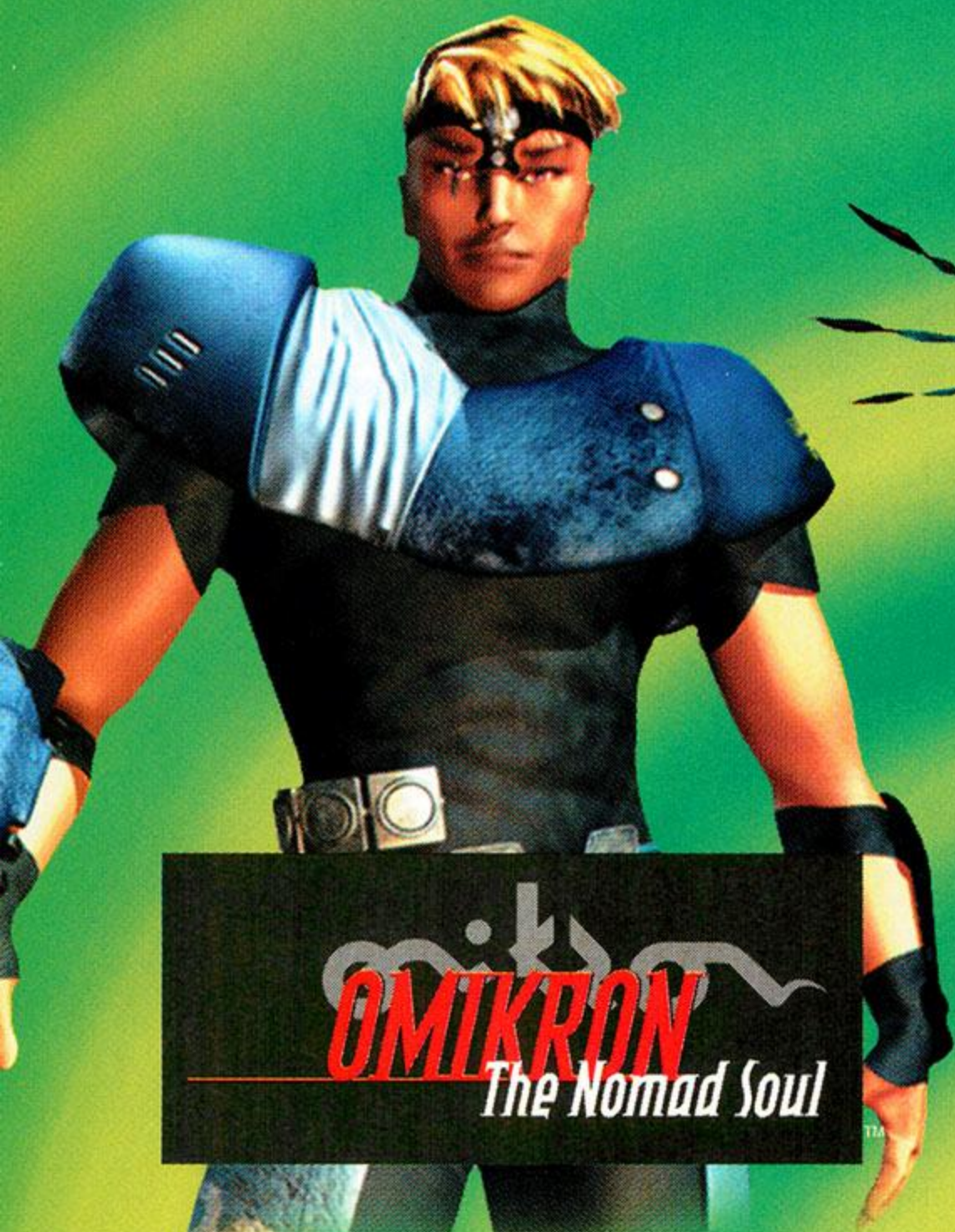
Aside from the realistic look of the Virtual Pistol, it has two unique selling points — a foot pedal and a sliding top. The foot pedal is for use with Time Crisis, of course, to allow for ducking and reloading, as in the coin-op game. It has suction cups on the bottom to prevent slippage, which is a good idea except for those of us who are playing on carpet. According to the instructions, the sliding top "give [sic] you a reaction feeling familiar to a real gun." Basically, whenever you squeeze the trigger, the slide top recoils with a loud clacking noise. There is no vibration or rumble, just the clacking. There are two problems I have with this feature.

First, once the novelty wears off, you'll realize that the noise is more annoying than enjoyable. Second, the movement is activated by a power supply which needs to be plugged in. Combine this with the connection between the foot pedal and the gun and the usual controller connection and video output connection of the Guncon and you've got a lot of wires going all over the place.

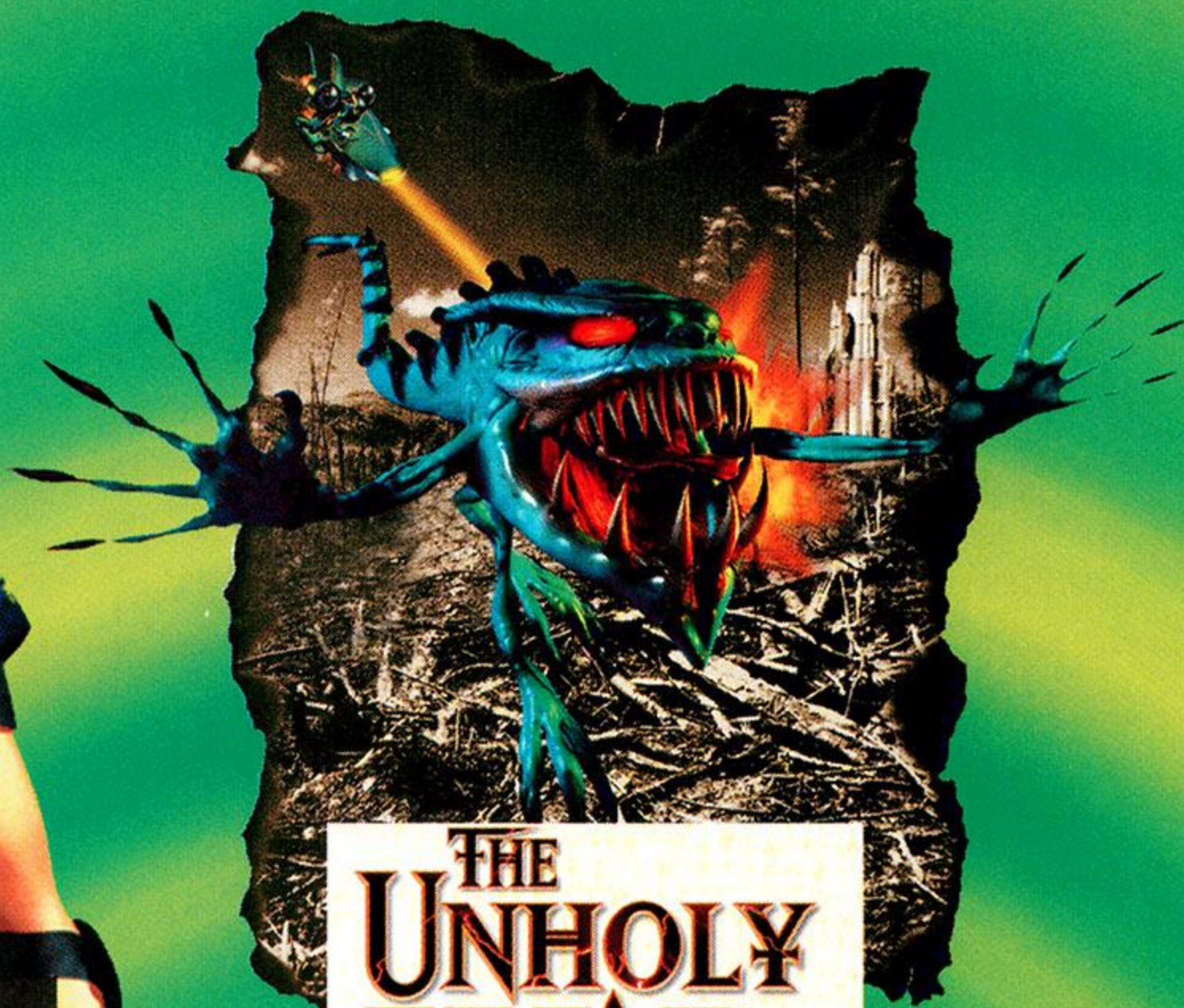
As to actual performance, I found that the gun didn't calibrate as easily. It always seemed to be off center, no matter how near or far I was standing. Worse, in games such as Point Blank where you need to fire a lot of shots in a short span of time, only 7 of 10 shots would register on the screen. It acted as if I was shooting too fast for it to keep up, which is definitely a flaw. If you are a die-hard Time Crisis fan who needs a foot pedal, or if you just love more tactile feedback than the usual rumble, you ought to give the Virtual Pistol a try. If you can get past the two additional wires and the need for another outlet, and don't mind the loud clacking sound, you may enjoy it. While I liked the look of the gun, I turned off the sliding top more often than not and I found the gun to be less than accurate with the Guncon games which are, arguably, the most popular light gun games out there.



EXCESSORY



OMIKRON
The Nomad Soul



**THE
UNHOLY
WAR**
OUT THINK. OUT MANEUVER. OUT LIVE.

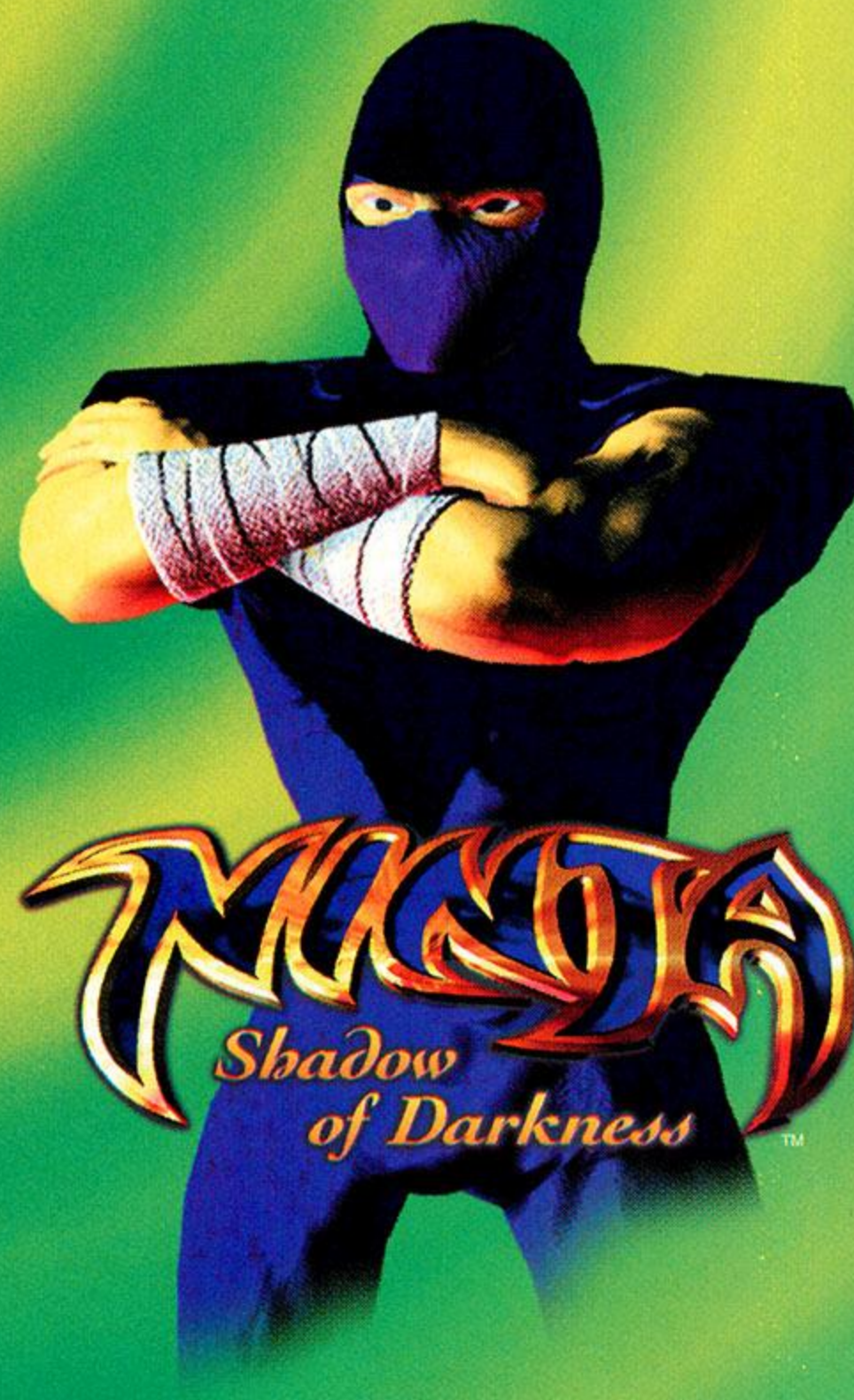


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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

ASCII FISHING CONTROLLER — ASCII — \$49.95

ASCII has long been known for their prowess in the peripheral arena and an example of the reason why is described below. Although not currently available for American distribution, the ASCII fishing controller is a hot item indeed with our brethren in Japan. If fishing games ever become as popular here in the states as they are in Japan, you can rest assured that you will see this controller on your local retailer's shelves. For now, however, you'll have to settle for a little information on the Japanese version. Designed to simulate the casting and reeling process, the ASCII fishing pole uses an analog sensor to move your line in and out and up and down. Of course, it's dual shock compatible which makes hooking a "big one" quite comical. Watching the professional gamers here at Dimension Publishing hook a fish with this "pole" is worth whatever asking price ASCII wants.



The "pole" rumbles when you get a bite and applies tension when you try to reel the big one in. To cast, you use the standard PlayStation button configuration and, to reel in, you use the attached reel. One negative aspect, however, is that there is no "quick reel" to get your line back. You have to reel the whole thing back. It gets a little tiring after a while, and you find yourself just wishing you get the thing over with. However, if you've got some time to kill and you really want to simulate the fishing experience, this is the tool for you. A word of warning though, the "pole" won't work with just any fishing game, so don't go down to your local import store, order one and expect it to work with your new fishing game from THQ. As of this writing, there are only two games designed for the "pole" and neither have had a North American release.

THE INTENSOR — ESG LABS — UNIT \$299.95 BASE \$129.95 SUBWOOFER \$169.95

Sit on this?! I think not! ESG labs brings to the "audio experience table"... the INTENSOR. The intensor is basically a chair... err rock, with built-in speakers and a floor model subwoofer (sold separately). Designed to deliver an explosive audio experience, from a variety of different sources, it does. The real question is would you want to sit on it? Not me. My rump was hurting so bad after the first extended experience with this rock, I mean chair, I could hardly walk. Ok, with that being said, the sound quality emitted from the intensor was (how should I put it?), LOUD! This bugger makes a lot of noise... and could very easily get you kicked out of any dwelling in a hurry. The chair (yes I'll stop calling



it a rock) does what it was designed to, by bringing a close to surround sound experience and bone shaking bass to something that can be sat on and folded away when not in use (at least that's what I think they were trying to do). With all the separate pieces, unit/base/subwoofer, the price clunks in at close to 600 dollars! Don't know about you folks out there in video game land, but that's too rich for my blood. I mean I can get a lot of "real" stereo components for those kind of pesos, not just a folding speaker box with legs. I'm being hard on this product but I see no real use for it, except maybe if you were designing your very own custom arcade machine, or something. Ok maybe if you have money to burn and have "racksystemphobia" this is right up your ally...

ASCII SPHERE 360° — ASCII — \$49.95

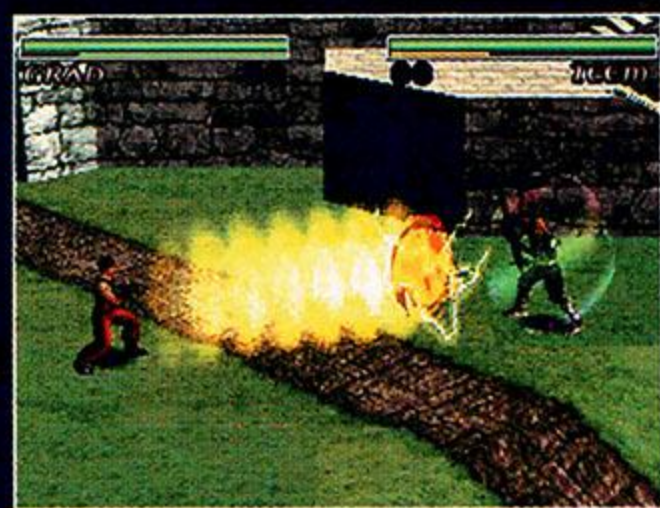
Now here is a controller that has been in development for nearly 4 years! The ASCII SPHERE 360° is probably the most innovative controller on the market (or ever made for that matter). The sphere allows full 6-axis control, meaning that, for true 3D games, this controller allows you to move in any and every direction with the manipulation of the black sphere. What is 6-axis? If you are familiar with the games Forsaken or Decent, these were 6-axis. You could move forward/back, up/down, strafe right/left, pitch your nose up/down, turn right/left and also roll to the right and left. If you tried playing these games with a standard PS controller you had to memorize WAY too many buttons to successfully maneuver your ship. Now, on the other hand, with the A. S. 360° it is possible to



innovatively control your ship, performing any maneuver your heart desires, with little effort. There is a learning curve with this baby but, after you get the hang of it you can pick almost any game and perform complex maneuvers like a pro (the controller also comes with a Colony Wars-ish training demo to help you master it)! Great for not only true 6-axis games, the A.S. 360° features 9 different configuration modes to work with most existing and upcoming games. It works with driving, flight sims, action/adventures and 1st person shooters very well. Even with games that were not programmed to be analog, the sphere translates the digital signal to a form of analog, allowing more precise control with a lot of your older games. The shape and feel of this controller is up to par with its technology (which is great). If you like 3D games and have a little patience, this controller will give you many hours of enjoyment.

EXCESSORY

LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS BESTOWED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN...



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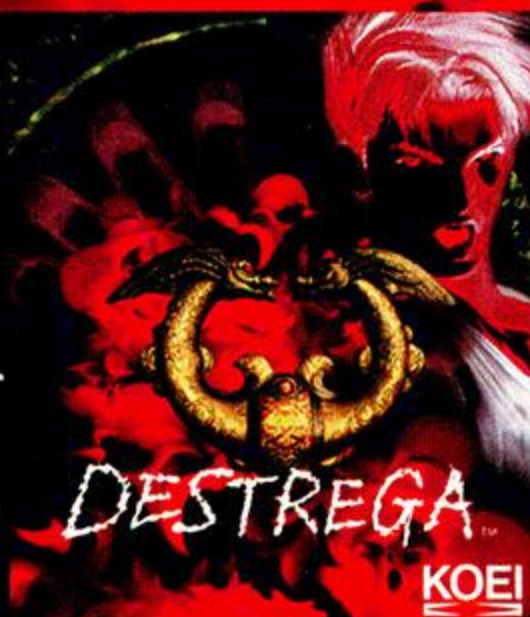
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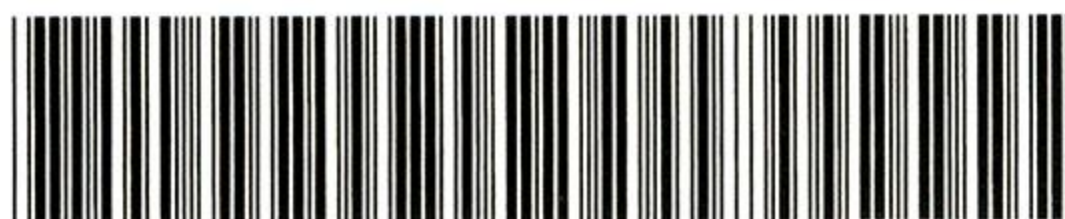
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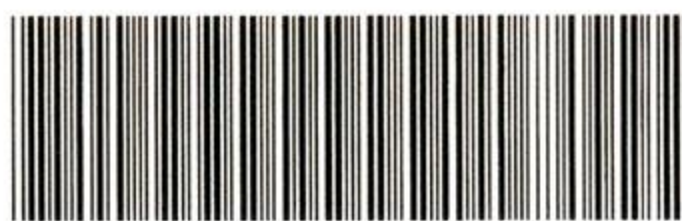
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SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of ASCII's hot new point and click adventure game for the PlayStation, *Clock Tower* or, if fighting's your thing, ASCII's *SpecializedStick* (you decide). But wait! That's not all: if you act now, we'll also include ASCII's super stylish ASCII Grip one-handed controller for the PlayStation, for your controlling pleasure, PLUS twelve (12) free issues of the best, the first, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, *PSExtreme*, of course! Whoa! That's a lot of cool stuff for just a code; what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Congratulations and thanks go to this month's winners, **Wilson Hart of Elmhurst, IL**. Code master Wilson sent us these awesome codez for *Motorhead*, the ultra hard heavy metal band featuring Lemmy... uh, wait, no, it's the ultra fast racing game from Fox/Gremlin. Cool, man.

Motorhead



Go to the option menu and enter the following cool codes.

Motion Blur: softhead

Micro Machines Mode: supercar

Division 2 cars and tracks: cowrules

Division 1 and 2 cars and tracks: fragtime

Nolby Hills, div 1 & 2 cars/tracks: turbomos

Final track, last car and all others: lastcode

Different demo: insanity

Disable cheats: nocheats

I hope I win!

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or ASCII Entertainment, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant. If you win but do not specify, in your code submission, which prize you want to receive (Felony 11-79 or an ASCII SpecializedStick), then we will choose for you.

Rouge Trip



Enter all codes at password screen

View Duke Nukem movie: **□ □ ○ ○ △ △**

Double Pickups: **L1 L2 ○ L1 R1 □**

beat it with Destroying Angel (bus)

Funtopia (challenge only): **× ○ L2 × □ L1**

beat it with the Meat Wagon

Goliath: **△ L1 R1 × L2 L2**

beat it with Bitchin' Wheels Nightshade: **R1 R2**

L1 L1 × ○

beat it with Rock N Rule (red chevy)

Flying Saucer: **R1 □ × □ L2 ○**

beat it with Sidewinder (dune buggy)>

Increased Armor: **R1 △ R1 △ L1 □**

beat it with Ozone (the ambulance)

Open Gulch for 2P Challenge: **× □ ○ L1 L2 □**

beat it with Vermin (little blue/violet car)

Helicopter: **L1 △ R2 △ △ R1**

beat it with Biohazard (green tank)

Battle Boss 1 (Nightshade) for 2P Challenge: **○**

R2 R1 □ L1 R2

beat it with Intruder (Rat-mobile)

Tenchu



RESTORE HEALTH:

Pause the game play and press: **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done correctly.

CARRY 99 ITEMS:

At the item selection screen: HOLD **L1** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done correctly.

INCREASED ITEM INVENTORY:

At the item selection screen: HOLD **L2** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ×**. You will hear a shout if done correctly. You will get one more of each item.

MORE ITEM TYPES:

At the item selection screen: HOLD **R1** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done

correctly.

LEVEL SELECT:

At the mission selection screen: HOLD **R2** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done correctly.

LAYOUT SELECT:

At the mission selection screen: HOLD **R1** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ×**. You will hear a shout if done correctly.

JAPANESE VOICES:

At the mission selection screen: HOLD **L1** and press **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done correctly. This code is for in game voices only the narration will still be in ENGLISH.

ALTERNATE AYAME COSTUME:

You Must have the ARMOR for this code to work: At the item selection screen: Press **←, ↓, □, △, ○**. You will hear a shout if done correctly. Now when you start the game you can select Ayame's third costume.

Code submitted by Sean A. Davis

Roscoe McQueen



OPEN ALL LEVELS

Enter the password "SPLASH"

Code submitted by Terence Jones

Circuit Breakers



TRACK SELECT:

Pause the game in single player mode. Then, enter the "Sound" option, highlight the "FX Volume" selection, and press **L1 + L2**.

NIGHT RACING

While selecting a track, hold **L1 + L2 + R1 + R2**. If you entered the code correctly, a new symbol will appear on the track.

Code submitted by Terence Jones

EXCLUSIVE

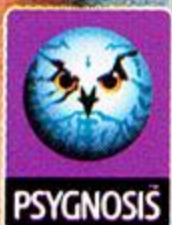


PSYCHO PeNGUINS



cRushers and wOrmholes

(All the reasons you love to ride)



Psybadek

www.psychosis.com



There are burly, uncharted riding environments out there and the only way you can get there is jump on a hoverdek and follow **Mia and Xako**.

Are you ready for **50 levels, five zones** (including desert, jungle and an underworld), psycho-penguins, crushers, bosses, wormholes and teleports?

If you're good, you can learn new tricks to access secret areas. If you're really good, someone might even pay homage to your skills with a righteous tattoo.



GAME SHARK™

Codez

Welcome to the Game Shark section. Each month we'll list the newest and coolest codez right here for your cheat'n pleasure. Warning: These codes won't work without a Game Shark. For the latest codez and info, get on the internet and check www.gameshark.com, www.cmgsccc.com or www.datel.co.uk. If you find a code doesn't work, you may need to upgrade your Game Shark. Check your instruction manual for details. (Most of these codes are "unofficial" and may or may not work correctly at all. Use at your own risk.)

FIFTH ELEMENT (GameShark version 2.3)

Both Player Codes

Infinite HealthD0060B2C 8385
80060B2C 8387
D0060B60 8385
80060B60 8387
D00526AA 0C01
800526AA 2400

Infinite Lives801FFF46 0009
Infinite Shield800DD54C 00FF
801FFF96 0001

Have Air Element801FFF5C 0001
Have Water Element801FFF5E 0001
Have Fire Element801FFF60 0001
Have Earth Element801FFF62 0001
Have Z Key Card801FFF64 0001
Have ZFX Energy Cell801FFF66 0001
Have Phloston Tickets801FFF68 0001
Have ???801FFF6A 0001
Have Mondoshawan Key801FFF6C 0001
Have ???801FFF6E 0001
Have Air Activator801FFF70 0001
Have Water Activator801FFF72 0001
Have Fire Activator801FFF74 0001
Have Earth Activator801FFF76 0001
Have ???801FFF78 0001
Have Unknown Item 1 (Invis)801FFF7C 0001
Have Unknown Item 2 (Invis)801FFF7E 0001
Have Unknown Item 3 (Invis)801FFF80 0001
Have Key Pass801FFF7A 0001

Korben Codes

Infinite Ammo800DD588 0163

Leeloo Codes

Have Contact Bombs801FFF5A 0001
Have Grenades801FFF82 0001

RIVAL SCHOOLS (GameShark version 2.0)

Both Discs

P1 Infinite Health801EFA02 00C8
P1 Max Power801EFC18 0900
P2 Infinite Health801EFE02 00C8
P2 Max Power801F0018 0900
Unlock Characters, Modes & Extras ..801F65D0 FFFF
801F65D4 FFFF
801F65D8 FFFF
801F65DA FFFF
801F65DC FFFF
801F65DE FFFF

Disc 1

Lesson Mode

Always Get an A801F1F22 011E
Only Do 1 Move to Complete Lesson ..801F1F14 0A00
CAESAR'S PALACE II (GameShark version 2.0)

Infinite Money801D5CC6 6554
NINJA (GameShark version 2.0)

Max Score8006D014 967F
8006D016 0098

Max Magic8006D018 0004
Have Silver Key8006D01C 0001

Infinite Lives8006D030 0009
Have Gold Key8006D034 0001

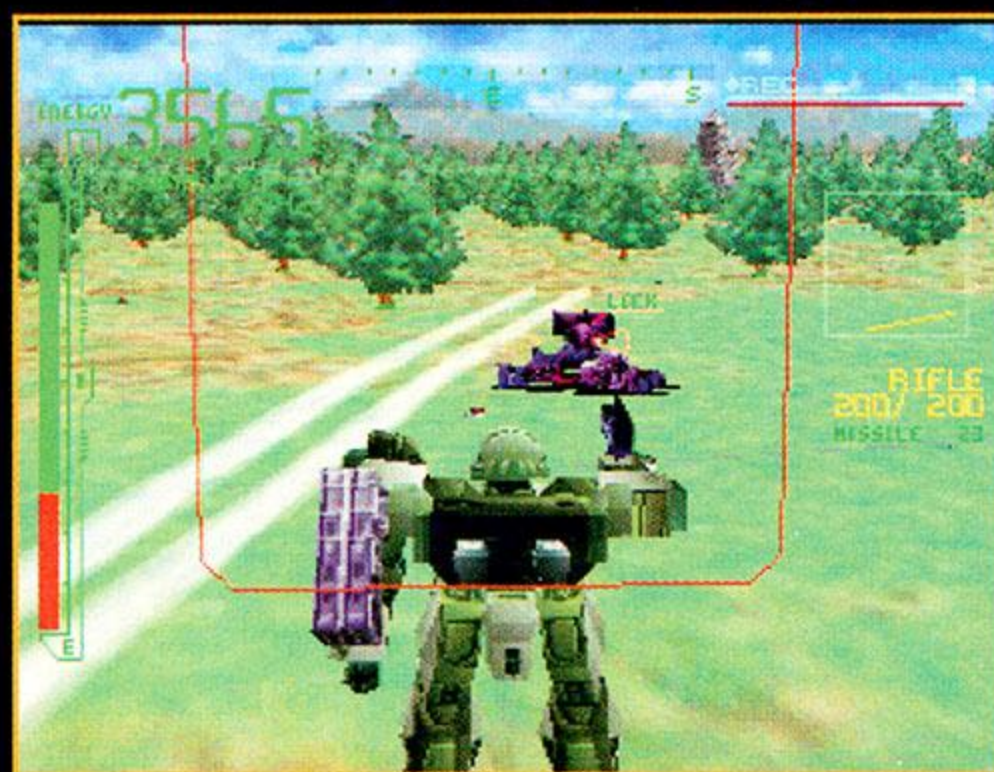
Infinite Gold8006D044 967F
8006D046 0098

Full Screen View8006D058 0032
Infinite Smoke Bombs8006D07C 0009

Infinite Life8006D09E 0050
Infinite Magic8006D0A0 0009

WE TYPE OUR SHARK KODEZ FROM WWW.CMGSCCC.COM

Armored Core 2



EXTRA LOCK-ONS:

Equip your core with the laser sword and missiles. Then, begin a game and approach an enemy from a safe distance. Draw the sword and press **↑**, **↓**, **R1**, **L1** to gain an extra lock on. Note: Up to six additional lock ons may be accumulated.

Code submitted by Albert Mosac

Guilty Gear (Import)



PLAY AS BOSSES: At the Arc System Works logo, press **↓** + **□** + **L1** + **R2**. Then, release the buttons when the phrase "Team Neo Blood" disappears. Now Testament, Justice, and Baiken may be selected in versus mode. In the U.S. version, this code gives a harder difficulty level instead of the bosses.

Code submitted by Nick Bartes

Bomberman World



PASSWORDS

stage 1-1: 2180
stage 1-2: 1986
stage 1-3: 1910

stage 1-4: 2911
stage 1-5: 1060
stage 2-1: 2008
stage 2-2: 0718
stage 2-3: 1704
stage 2-4: 1401
stage 2-5: 2701
stage 3-1: 0902
stage 3-2: 0209
stage 3-3: 2713
stage 3-4: 1068
stage 3-5: 3639
stage 4-1: 9174
stage 4-2: 0648
stage 4-3: 2736
stage 4-4: 0588
stage 4-5: 1891
stage 5-1: 6235
stage 5-2: 2238
stage 5-3: 1207
stage 5-4: 3021
stage 5-5: 0351

Full power

stage 1: 1197

stage 2: 1418

stage 3: 7310

stage 4: 2777

stage 5: 3623

Pure War: 1622

Crazy Blocks: 6833

Battle Megamix: 8686

Extra Battle Stages: 3636

Code submitted by Gail Salamanca

C&C: Retaliation



CHEAT MODE

Click on the "Teams" button menu with **○** (or whichever button is currently configured as "Cancel" or the right mouse button). Then move the pointer over the following icons on the tool bar and press **○** ("Cancel") or the Right Mouse Button on each.

Full Map: **△**, **△**, **×**, **○**, **△**, **□**

IronCurtian: Square, **×**, **○**, **×**, **△**, **△**

Nuke: **○**, **×**, **○**, **○**, **×**, **□**

ChrononShift: Square, **○**, **△**, **×**, **○**, **○**

ParaBombs: **×**, **×**, **×**, **○**, **△**, **□**

Money: **×**, **×**, **□**, **○**, **○**, **○**

Civilians Under Attack: **□**, **×**, **□**, **×**, **□**, **×**

Instant Win: **○**, **○**, **△**, **×**, **×**, **△**

Lose Mission: **○**, **×**, **○**, **□**, **□**, **×**

Code submitted by Ryan Lambert

Send all code submissions to:

EXECUTE

Dimension Publishing

1175 Chess Drive, Suite E

Foster City, CA 94404

or email us at: d3@quake.net

EXECUTE

PS *Extreme's*

1998 Holiday Buyer's Guide



PS*Extreme's*

1998 Holiday Buyer's Guide

OK, here we go again, it seems like just yesterday that we were putting together our list of recommended purchases for the 1997 holiday season. Last years buyer's guide was a tremendous success. We've never received as much mail for any single section of the magazine. Many of our readers still refer to it for their current purchases. Here at PSExtreme, we feel our number one obligation is to give our readers the best information on how to spend their hard earned cash, making sure they don't get stuck with some over-hyped retread of the same game they've been playing for years. Our Holiday Buyer's Guide is the year long culmination of our efforts. Like last year, we've broken down the games into categories and provided a summary of the games attributes. We've also perforated the guide, so you can pull it out and take it with you, when you go on those eminently enjoyable(?) holiday shopping excursions. We hope you enjoy the guide and have a great holiday season!!!



Puzzle

Sometimes you really need to give your brain something more substantial to chew on than platform antics, street brawls or sci-fi epics. The following games will challenge your mind, as well as your physical reflexes.



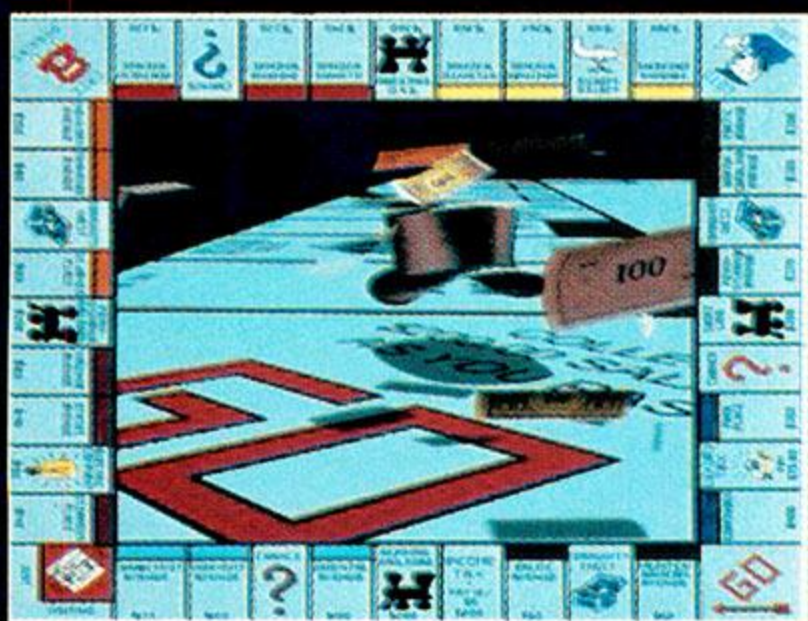
Roll Away: *September, 90%.*

Not exactly a bumper crop of puzzle games this year, but Roll Away clearly stands out as the best. Addictive gameplay and increasingly difficulty levels, not to mention the overall size of the game, make it the must-have for puzzle solvers.



Mr. Domino: *Not Yet Reviewed.*

We just recently got our hands on this title and were immediately impressed. Addiction is the name of the game here, and who can resist knocking over a bunch of dominoes? You'll definitely want to check this game out.



Monopoly: *February, 85%.*

What can you say about Monopoly that hasn't already been said. Hasbro took this time-less classic and converted it to a very unique PC title and then ported it over to the PlayStation. A nice surprise at the tail end of last year's holiday season, Monopoly still holds up well against the current crop of puzzle games.



Devil Dice: *October, 81%.*

While not the most addictive of puzzle games, Devil Dice offers a refreshing change of pace to the objects falling on your head style that permeates the category these days. The ability to play with three of your best friends is probably the best overall attribute of Devil Dice, other than the fact that there's not a lot of Puzzle games around.

RPG/Strategy

Not a banner year for RPG's, but a nice collection for the true fan of the category. Kagero is definitely the class of the bunch, but the others all present a unique take on the theme.



Kagero: Deception II: *December, 95%.*

Kagero is one of those games that doesn't fit neatly into any one category. Suffice it to say, however, it's a top notch title no matter what category you lump it into. The sequel to last year's award winning Deception, Kagero picks up where Deception left off. A truly engrossing story line with huge levels and multiple puzzle solving and strategy elements make Kagero a must have for this holiday season.



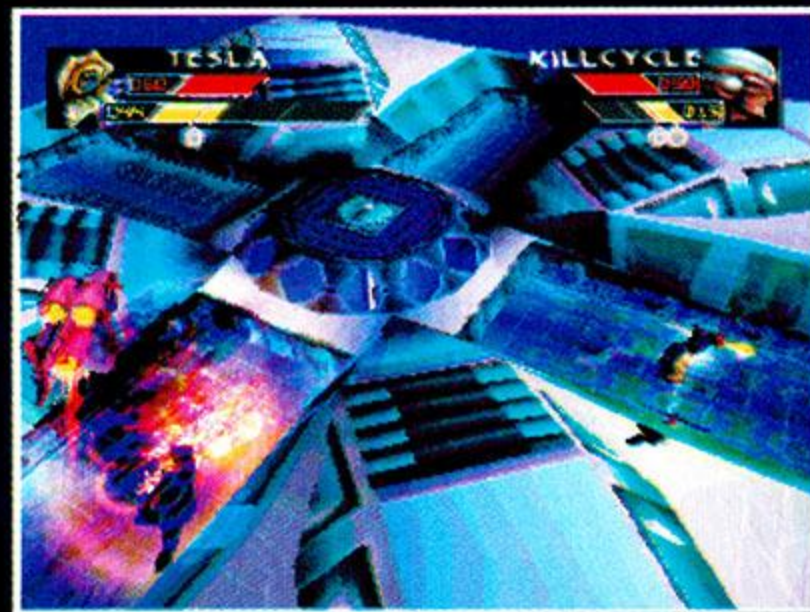
Parasite Eve: *October, 94%.*

From the creators of Final Fantasy 7, Parasite Eve is a slightly different take on the genre, offering more cinematics and less confrontation. A very involved story line takes you on a multi-faceted adventure through the eyes of one very sensuous NYPD officer. Expect about six to eight hours of thorough gameplay if you're a professional, and 10 to 12 to get through this very intriguing and visually stunning RPG.



Gran Stream Saga: *July, 92%*

Centered around a young orphan named Lune, the Gran Stream Saga places you in the role of this young lad who is the only one who can save the world from sure destruction. The entire game is presented in 3D, not just the fighting scenes. If you're new to the RPG category, this is a great place to start.



The Unholy War: *November, 90%.*

Reminiscent of the original Star Control, The Unholy War is a 3D combat/strategy game set in a science/fantasy environment. You have your choice of two modes of play and either side, with fourteen characters each, for variety's sake. A truly unique game, The Unholy War deserves a shot at your top ten list!



Alundra: *February, 90%.*

A very "Zelda-esque" RPG, Alundra targets the RPG traditionalist in all of us. Centered around a young man who has the ability to enter other people's dreams, this power has allowed him to take a peak into the future and get a glimpse of mankind's ugly fate if he doesn't step up to the plate soon.



Broken Sword: February, 90%.

A quirky point and click game, Broken Sword casts you in the role of George Stobbart, an American in Paris who is nearly killed when a bomb goes off in a nearby cafe. The game takes you through his investigation, where you meet a number of rather interesting people and explore some pretty cool places. Not for everybody, but a cool game nonetheless.



Breath of Fire 3: May, 89%.

One of our favorite sequels, Breath of Fire 3 is an old-school RPG that has its roots back on the Super Nintendo. While it has a very 16bit look and feel, it's packed with very deep and involved story line. A very entertaining title for the purist.



Azure Dreams: July, 89%.

A solid RPG in every respect, Azure Dreams offers something for everyone. A great story line, updated graphics and fantastic battle sequences make Azure Dreams a solid addition to any RPG'ers library.



Kartia: August, 87%.

If very long, involved story lines and extended battle sequences are your thing, Kartia is the game for you. Playing Kartia is almost like reading a book, there is an incredible amount of thought that is required to progress through this game. While the gameplay elements are very typical, the versus mode and updated visuals make Kartia stand out in the crowd.

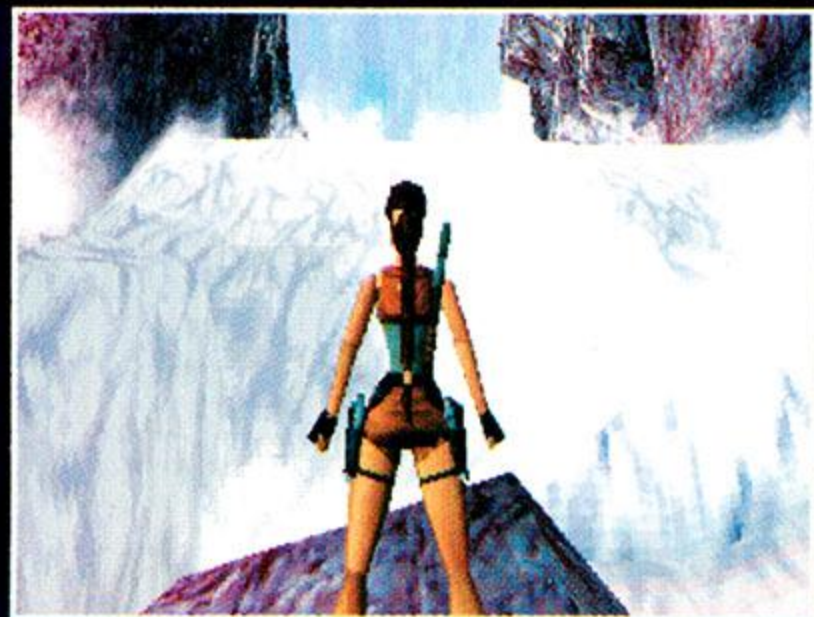


Saga Frontier: April, 87%

Another stand out title from THQ, Saga Frontier offers more than 100 hours of gameplay through seven different quests. Not the best RPG out there but, if like diving into an extended gameplay experience, Saga Frontier won't disappoint.

Action/Adventure

1998 will be remembered for the most amazing crop of unique adventure games in the history of home consoles. TR3, RE2 Metal Gear Solid, Medieval; everyone of these is absolutely amazing. This is the one category where you may want to pick up every title on the list and then take a long vacation.



Tomb Raider III: Not Yet Reviewed.

While not yet reviewed, we've played enough of the game to know that if you liked the first two, you'll love the third. Expect to see a ton of new animations and a lot more puzzle solving.



Resident Evil 2: March, 98%

The long awaited sequel to Capcom's blockbuster 1st generation title, this sequel is even better. This time around, while the gameplay elements are very similar to the original, when you finish the game you are offered the chance of starting a second quest with new cut scenes, monsters, etc. Satisfaction guaranteed!!!



Medieval: November, 98%.

Medieval will probably be the sleeper hit of 1998. While there is considerable hype surrounding some of the other games in this category, Medieval has quietly captured the imagination of even the most jaded of gamers. This free roaming 3D adventure chronicles the misadventures of Sir Dan Forstesque who was accidentally brought back to life and is solely responsible for restoring peace on the planet.



Metal Gear Solid: December, 98%.

What can we say, although this is probably the most over hyped game in the history of the PlayStation, eclipsing even Final Fantasy 7, Metal Gear Solid is an absolute blast to play and one of the most well designed games on the system. Although it may be a little short if you blow through the cinematics, it's still a must have!



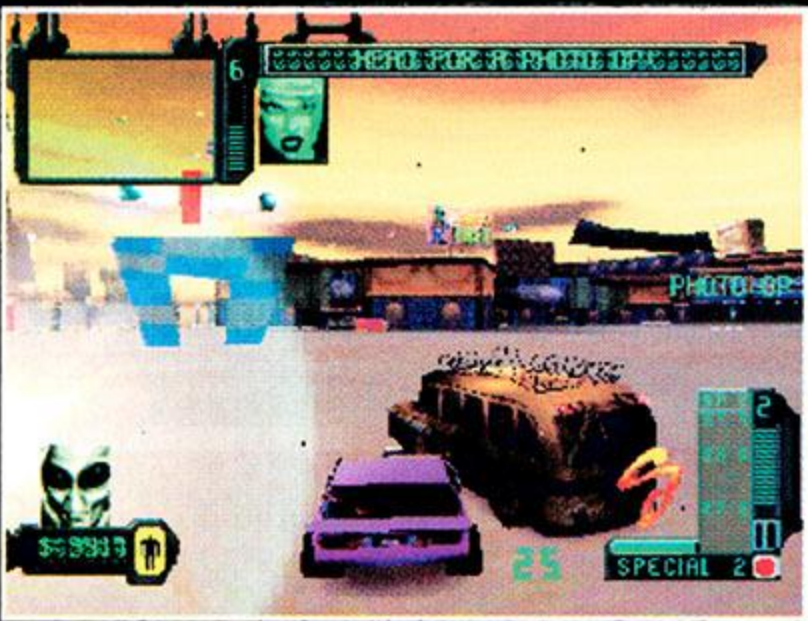
Reboot: April, 96%. While not in the same league as the above mentioned titles, Reboot offers a unique and thorough gameplay experience. Based on the cartoon series of the same name, you take control of the series hero, Bob, and lead him on a series of adventures where you confront his arch nemesis, Megabyte.



Duke Nukem, Time to Kill: December, 95%. The best Duke yet, this one is fully 3D and offers many more hours of quality gameplay. Developed from the ground up to be a PlayStation title, TTK is displayed in the PlayStation's high res mode and offers some stunning visuals. While definitely skewed toward the adult audience, it does have many of the same elements that have made the Tomb Raider series so popular.

Shooter/Combat

Although the shooter category has never really caught fire like in the 16-bit days, this year has produced a bumper crop of quality titles. If shooters are your thing, you won't be disappointed with any these titles.



Rogue Trip: November, 95%.

Without question, Rogue Trip is the king of the category. Developed by the same folks who brought us the first two games in the Twisted Metal series, Rogue Trip takes the genre to its next logical level. Look for enhanced visuals, an incredible soundtrack and tons more strategy.



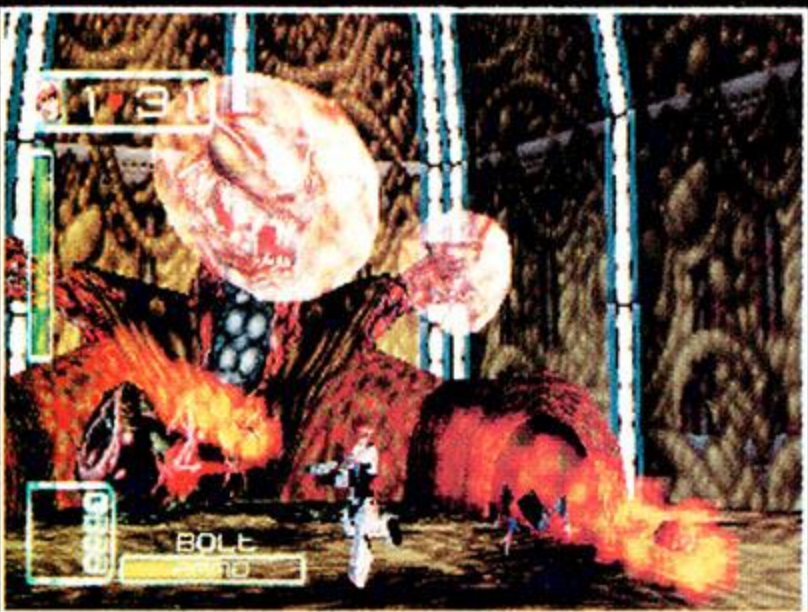
Einhander: May, 94%.

Another one of those "sleeper" titles, Einhander is guaranteed to please even the most critical fans of this style of game. Developed by the same people who brought us Final Fantasy 7, Einhander is a side-scrolling shooter that does everything right. Awesome graphics, cool bosses and amazing explosions, coupled with a longer than average shelf life, make Einhander land near the top of our Christmas list.



Colony Wars Vengeance: December, 92%.

The sequel to last year's critically acclaimed space based shooter, Colony Wars Vengeance sets a new standard. While the original was somewhat overlooked last holiday season, you may not want to make the same mistake twice. There is more gameplay packed into this game than ever thought possible. You'll definitely want to check this game out.



Assault: Retribution December, 91%.

Six huge levels, amazing pyrotechnics and "One"-like gameplay, vault Assault onto our buyer's guide. Not much in the story line category, but non-stop action keeps us coming back for more.



Forsaken: *June, 91%.*

Easily the most intriguing ad campaign in the category, Forsaken combines stellar graphics with blistering speed to create one of the years more memorable shooters.



G Darius: *October, 90%.*

Although an excellent one player game, if you're a frequent user of the two player mode, G Darius is the shooter to own. Not quite as visually stunning as some of the other shooters currently available, but its got gameplay baby!!

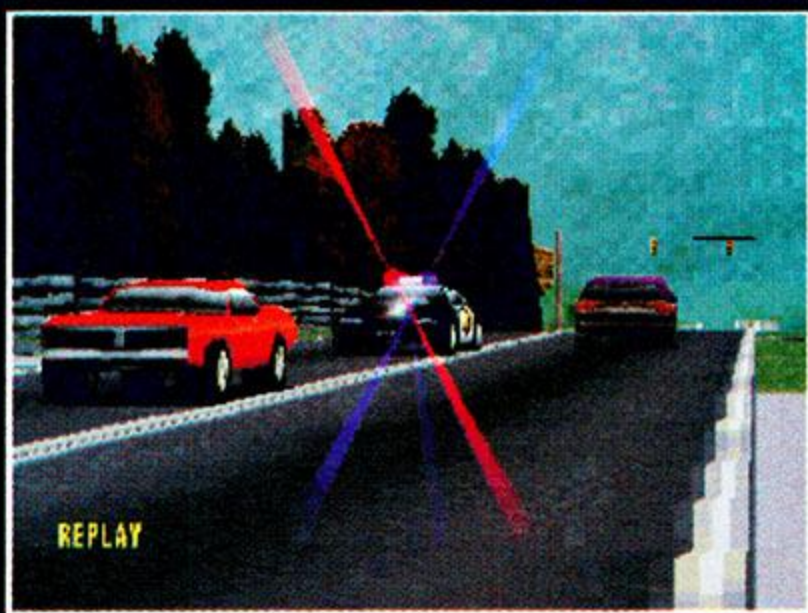
Racing/Flying

Once again, the PlayStation's most prolific genre is extremely well represented. These are the best driving games built for any system. Nothing else even comes close.



Gran Turismo: *June, 98%*

When we first got our hands on this title back in the Spring, we knew we were in for a treat. GT is the best racing game on any platform – period. It's the best looking, most challenging and offers the most variety. If you can't get excited about this game, get some therapy!



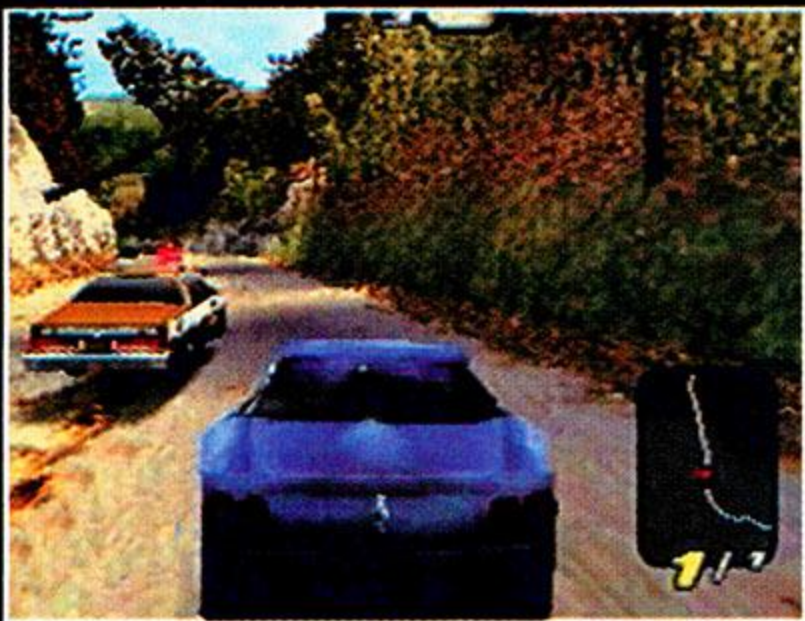
Test Drive 5: *December, 97%.*

One of the favorites for Racing Game of the Year, TD 5 is definitely the best offering in the arcade style category. Like last year, you choose between today's modern super cars and yesterday's muscle machines. Last year, there were some control problems. This year, they've done everything right.



N20: Nitrous Oxide: *July, 93%.*

Not a lot to think about in N20. It's a brilliantly colorful, fast-paced racer. You can easily tune out on this game and just blast away until your heart's content.



Need For Speed III: May, 93%.

A year wouldn't be complete without another version of NFS. Although we liked last year's version, it was definitely not for everyone. This year, EA has taken the game back to its roots and has made it the best NFS yet!!



Test Drive: Off Road 2: December, 91%

Last year's Test Drive: Off Road was a decent racer, but not much of an Off Road experience. This year they've incorporated the TD 4 engine and made a truly remarkable game. Accolade is 2 for 2 this year!



Streak: December, 91%.

This one caught us by surprise. Developed by the Rogue Trip folks, this hover board racer is a freakin' blast, although somewhat short in the replay category. In a genre stuffed to the gills with quality titles, Streak definitely stands out!



Moto Racer 2: November, 90%.

This one falls under the category of; "if you missed the first one, it's a must have, if you have the original, buy something else!"

Arcade/Platform

It took a while, but the PlayStation now has an incredible library of arcade/platform titles. Everyone of the titles listed below is a sure crowd pleaser and a perfect gift for the whole family.



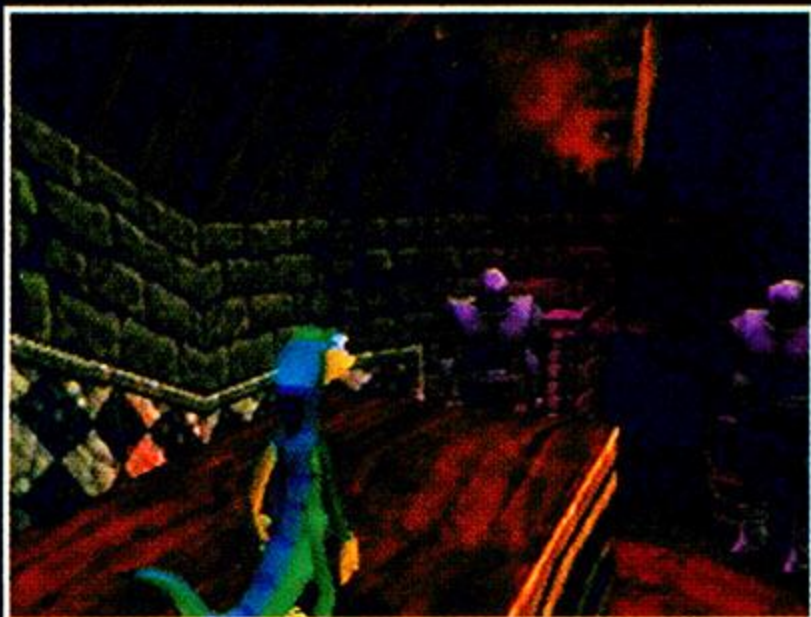
Spyro: October, 98%.

First chronicled in the pages of PSExtreme, Spyro is a free-roaming, go-anywhere 3D platformer. While it may look like it skews toward the Rug Rats crowd, it's a blast for the whole family. A little more challenging than your average platform game!



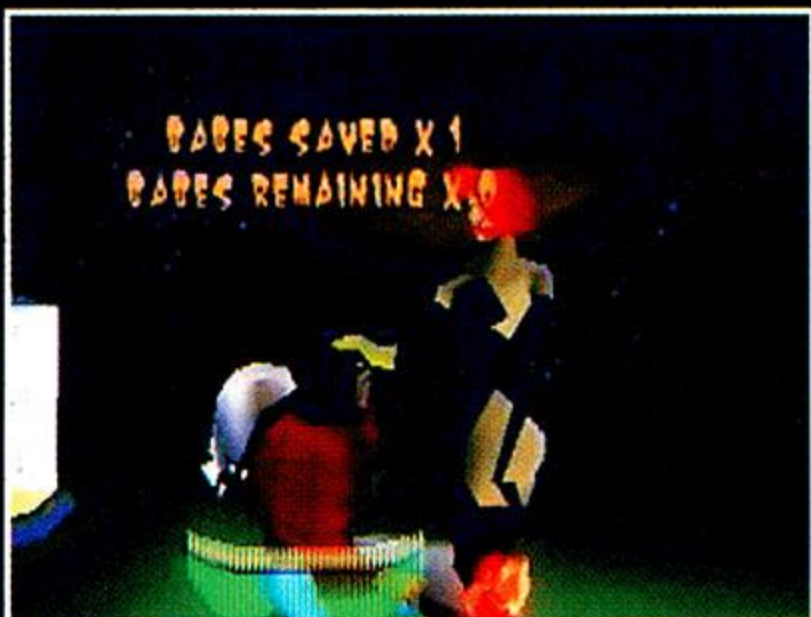
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped: *December, 98%.*

Another perennial crowd pleaser, Crash is back with his best adventure yet. Warped incorporates three new 3D levels without any loss of pace or visual brilliance. A step forward for the series and a definite "must have" for the entire family!



GEX: Enter The Gecko: *March, 98%.*

Although this title was included in last year's buyers guide, (even though it wasn't yet reviewed), it still stacks up well against this holiday season's entries. GEX mixes intricate level design, a healthy dose of humor and challenging gameplay, with some of the best visuals yet to be seen on the PlayStation.



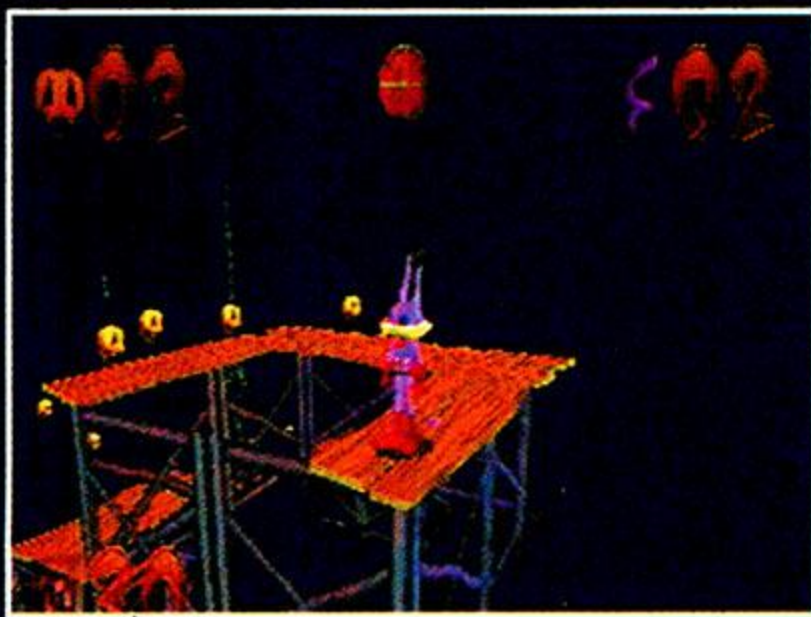
Blasto: *May, 96%.*

Sony's first home grown, go anywhere 3D product is a cool looking game. Monstrous level design, Warner Brothers style cartoon graphics and a campy sense of humor keep Blasto near the top of our list.



A Bug's Life: *December, 95%.*

Based on the Disney movie of the same name, this action/platformer emphasizes lush graphics and precise gameplay. A pleasant surprise, A Bug's Life ranks right up there with the rest of the cream of the crop. Oh, and the license doesn't hurt either.



Jersey Devil: *July, 93%.* Is it just us, or does it seem like Sony owns this category? Jersey Devil should be on everyone's wish list. Lush cartoon style graphics, blistering gameplay and intuitive level design made this title a nice surprise for everyone involved. Fun for the whole family.



Tomba: *May, 93%.*

Relying purely on the quality of its gameplay, Tomba has staked-out a firm spot in our buyer's guide. While not as visually exciting as the other action/platformers, it's classic gameplay and increasingly challenging level design make it worth a second look.



Wild 9: *December, 91%*

This long awaited, terminally delayed, over-hyped, action/platformer from Shiny finally arrived this Fall and almost lived up to some of the hype. Highly detailed graphics and challenging level design, although a little too linear for our tastes, make Wild 9 a keeper in this category. There is an undeniable fun factor in this game that's missing in a lot of other action/platformers currently available. A pleasant surprise!!



Heart of Darkness: *September, 90%.*

Another long-awaited title that seemed to slip in and out of oblivion, but ultimately ended up being a quality piece of software. HoD is a traditional 2D side scroller with 3D elements spread throughout its multiple levels. The game has a very movie like feel to it that draws you into the game like no other action platformer, past or present. It's a rare thing indeed, when the storyline is an integral part of an action/platform game. A little on the short side, but still a quality purchase.

Fighting

Another banner year for fighting game enthusiasts. The third installment in the Tekken series, as well as newcomers in the form of Cardinal Syn and Bloody Roar, have once again helped establish the PlayStation's dominance in this category.



Tekken 3: *May, 97%.*

While not a quantum leap forward from Tekken 2, it's still, hands down, the best fighting game on the system. Lightning speed, unbelievable graphics, thoughtful character design and intuitive play mechanics make the Tekken series the perennial favorite.



Bloody Roar: *March, 93%.*

Great cinematics, high polygon counts, blistering speed and detailed 3D environments make Bloody Roar a real contender in the fighting game wars. Bloody Roar is the closest thing to the Tekken series currently available on the PlayStation.



Cardinal Syn: *June, 92%.*

This title broke some new ground in the fighting arena this year, while at the same time taking the genre back to its roots, through a tiered progression of the fighters. Incredible graphics and awesome 3D, plus tight analog control, make Cardinal Syn a must have for fighting game fans.



Guilty Gear: *December, 92%*

Guilty Gear came as quite a surprise to most people, but this traditional 2D fighter is an absolute power house. Reminiscent of some of the early Street Fighter titles, Guilty Gear combines awesome combos, lightning speed, insane pyrotechnics and lush 2D graphics.



WWF Warzone: *September, 92%.*

Don't ever underestimate the draw of wrestling titles. Although there may be some debate about whether they are sports or fighting games, the fact of the matter is, they're just plain fun. Warzone is the cream of the '98 crop, featuring the WWF license and amazing 3D gameplay, with a unique create a wrestler feature.



Rival Schools: *November, 90%.*

Capcom took their traditional 2D fighter look and feel and made an incredible game with Rival Schools. Laced with Street Fighter overtones, Rival Schools features a two disc set; the first is a pretty straight forward conversion of the arcade game, the second is loaded with special goodies just for PlayStation owners, including a lesson mode that teaches you the basics of combat. Perfect for the first time user and die-hard Capcom fan.



Bushido Blade 2: *November, 90%.*

The sequel to last year's much talked about entry into the fighting arena from SquareSoft. Since that time, EA has purchased Square (who haven't they purchased?) and is publishing the sequel. Much more involved than your average fighter, BB2 requires quite a bit of thought to get the most out of the game. The storyline behind each fighter is quite extensive and mastering all of their moves is a challenge. Not for everyone, but an enriching experience for those willing to put in the time.

Sports

The reason that the PlayStation is the undisputed king of the platforms is because of the quality of its sports titles. Every one of the following games is a shining example of the PlayStation's prowess.



NFL Gameday: *October, 98%.*

Another banner year for the Gameday franchise. Polygon counts have increased, as well as the frame rate and, this year, you have the inclusion of a top-notch broadcast team – in the form of Dick Enberg and Phil Simms. True football nirvana.



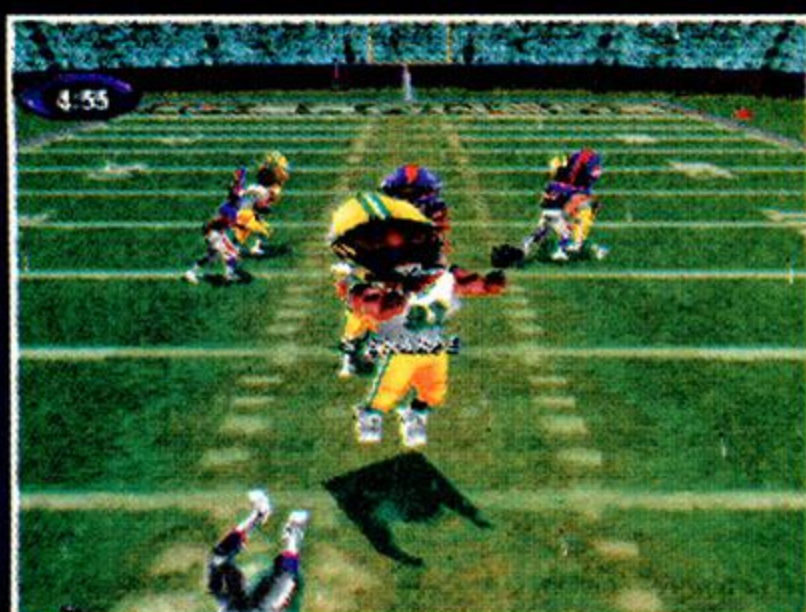
NFL Blitz: *October, 98%.*

The only surprise for this arcade style football game is that Midway was able to pull off such an incredible conversion. It's all here: the taunting, the incredible graphics, great frame rate and of course, those bone jarring tackles. No matter how many football games you have, you need this one!



NCAA Gamebreaker: *Not Yet Reviewed.*

While we haven't received a fully reviewable copy yet, it's obvious that last years King of the College Grid Iron has benefited from the same enhancements made to the Gameday franchise.



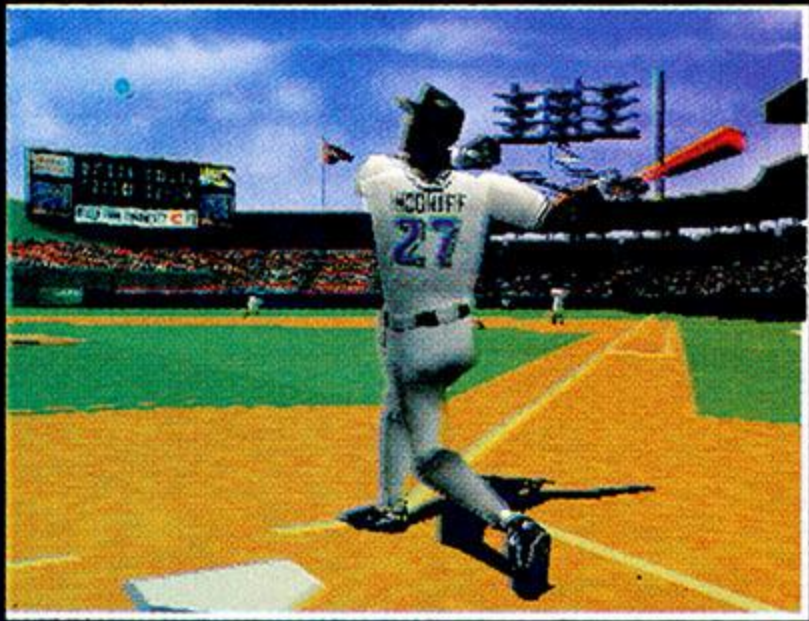
NFL Xtreme: *August, 94%.*

Similar to NFL Blitz, Xtreme is an arcade style football game that uses the Gameday play mechanics. If you like to have a little more control over your arcade-style mayhem, NFL Xtreme is the game for you.



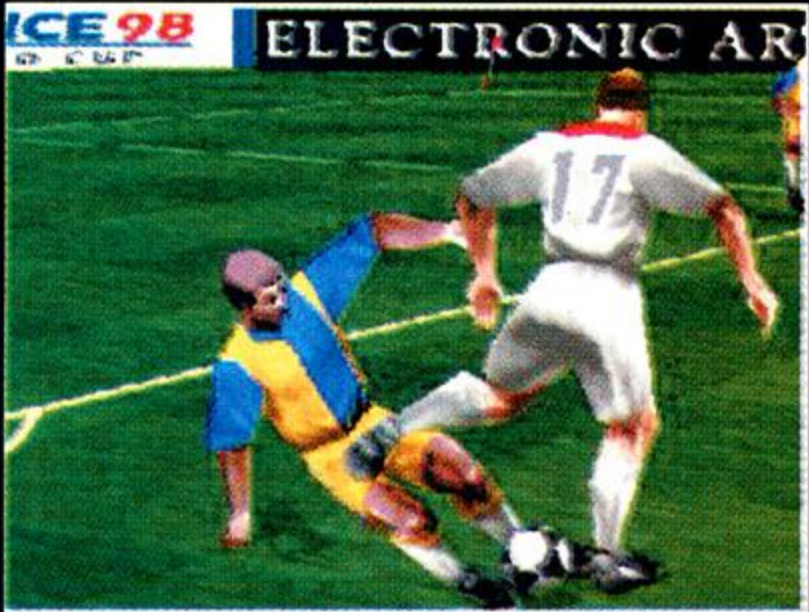
VR Baseball 99: *June, 92%.*

The best playing game of baseball in '97 made the jump to must-have status this year, with enhanced visuals. The gameplay wasn't touched, but the graphics engine was totally revamped to make VR Baseball a real contender in the baseball wars.



MLB 99: *June, 96%.*

The best version yet of 989 Studios' take on the grand old game. More precise play mechanics, enhanced visuals and awesome broadcast quality, made MLB 99 the best baseball game of the year!



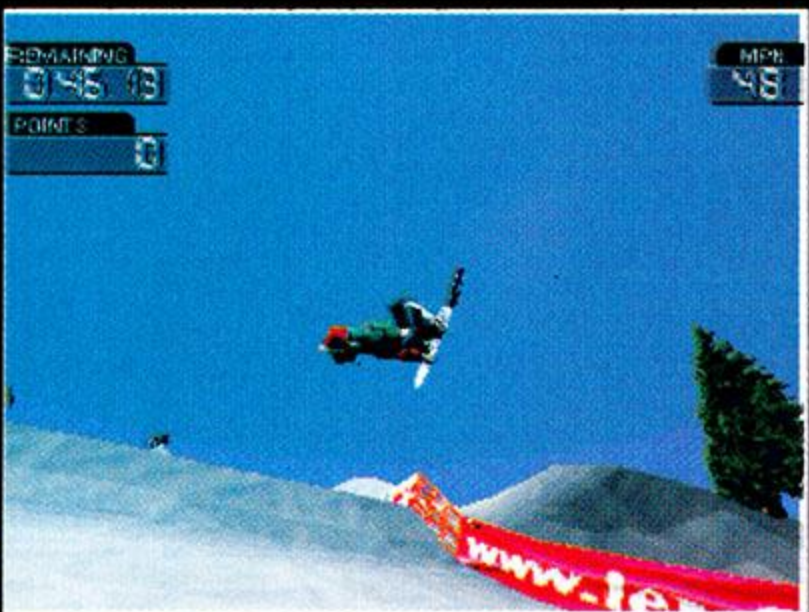
World Cup Soccer: *July, 93%.*

If there is one thing EA Sports does right, it's soccer. World Cup Soccer is far better than anything else on the PlayStation. It's all here, speed, agility and amazing graphics. No new ground broken, just the best darn game of soccer to be found on the system.



Hot Shots Golf: *April, 92%.*

This game is a no-brainer. Just go out and get it. It is, by far, the best game of Golf ever created for any system. Don't let the cartoonish graphics fool you, Hot Shots is truly amazing in every respect.



Cool Boarders 3: *November, 92%.*

Definitely the best Snow Boarding game available, CB3 boasts crystal clear graphics, a wide variety of player animations and adrenaline-producing music. A very fun game, with a longer-than-average shelf life. Cool Boarders 3 is sure to please.



NHL FaceOff 99: *December, 95%.*

FaceOff returns this year with enough enhancements to keep it the King of the Rink. Frame rates have been increased, and the opportunity to tune it to your liking has been added. The game is absolutely seamless and presents some of the best graphics to be found in a sports game.

Peripherals

The sole purpose of peripherals is to enhance and expand your game-playing experience. Below is a listing of some of the better and more "unique" peripherals that you can get your hands on (and around) this Holiday Season.



Sony Dual Shock™ analog controller: *March, Gold.*

Easily the must-have add on of '98. The Dual Shock™ analog controller should be required equipment to play a PlayStation® game console game. Precise analog control, along with a good dose of vibration, make for a very enjoyable experience indeed.



ASCII AV Selector: *April, Gold.*

If you're like us and have more than one gaming system, the AV Selector from ASCII is a dream come true. It allows you to keep up to SIX of your systems hooked up at once, and allows you to select which system you want to use by simply pressing a button. Best of all, it has S-VHS input and outputs for all six ports. Whoa!



NUBY Remote Wizard: *March, Gold.*

Get rid of those tangled cords once and for all. Nuby's remote game pads allow you to get free of the connector cords by transmitting a signal similar to a remote controlled TV.



Nyko Super Cobra Light Gun: *November, Gold.*

Easily the most comfortable and accurate light gun available for the PlayStation. Only Namco's GunCon comes close!



Sony 50" KL-W9000 Monitor: *October, Gold.*

Wow, this is truly an incredible monitor. Weighing in at less than 120lbs, this 50" wide screen makes even the worst gaming experience seem worth it. A little on the pricey side – \$9,000.00 give or take, but if you have the means, we highly recommend it!

Holiday shopping list:

Dear Santa/Mom/Dad/Wife/Husband/Significant Other,

Please buy these PlayStation games for me. If this is too much trouble, just give me cash. How about 10's and 20's?

1

2

3

4

5

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Thank you, your son/daughter/husband/wife/dude/dudette.

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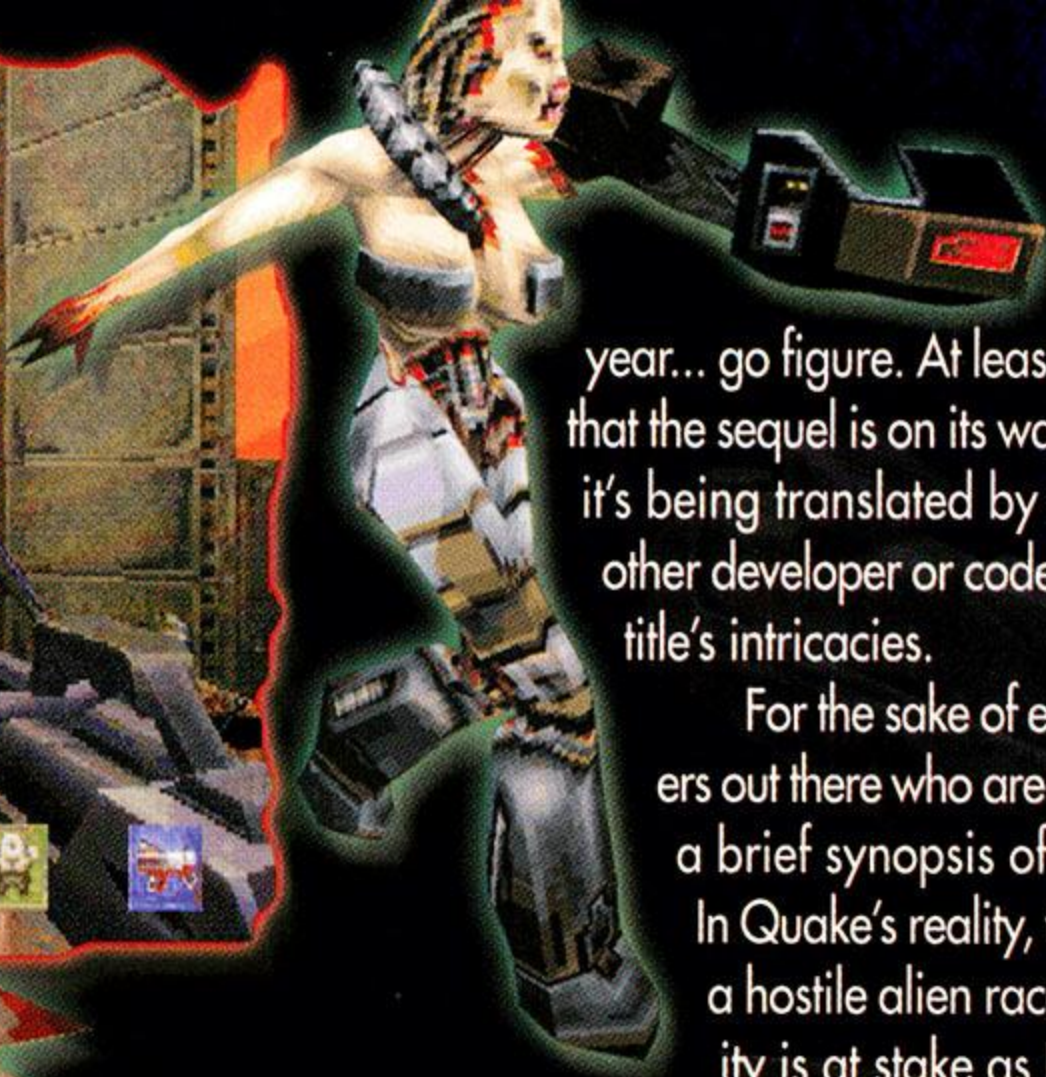
QUAKE II



Id Software started quite a phenomenon back in the early 90's when they took an old-school Apple computer title by the name of Castle Wolfenstein and made a first-person 3D corridor shooter out of it for a sequel of sorts. The game featured a lone soldier going against an unlimited army of Nazis in an attempt to take down Hitler himself. After the dumbfounding success of this shareware title, id outdid themselves again by creating DOOM and its legions of sequels. Doom redefined this new genre that id themselves had created and is still to this day, one of the number one selling video game titles ever. Ultimately DOOM spawned Quake and, of course, the sequel Quake

II (which is why I'm writing this article in the first place as Activision and id Software are currently hard at work re-programming this kick-ass PC title onto our favorite video game console, hallelujah!). One more interesting tid-bit before I end with the dull history lesson: amazingly, this is the first incarnation of Quake to hit the PlayStation. While two different DOOMS were released for the PS, Quake mysteriously never made it onto the system. The real shocker is, it came out for the 3D-inferior Sega Saturn last

EXCLUSIVE



year... go figure. At least we can rest easy that the sequel is on its way and not only that, it's being translated by the masters at id, not some other developer or code-shop who isn't familiar with the title's intricacies.


For the sake of educating the two or three readers out there who are unfamiliar with this title, here's a brief synopsis of the story and gameplay: In Quake's reality, the Earth is threatened by a hostile alien race. The future of humanity is at stake as Earth launches its final assault against its alien aggressors. Players must infiltrate the alien planet and fight their way through heavily fortified military installations. This includes ducking gunfire spray, wielding an amazing array of deadly weaponry, crawling through narrow shafts and evading a continual barrage of gunfire as they annihilate their enemies in a host of slaughter-strewn levels — all in a first person, 3D perspective.

So, here's what the PlayStation version of Quake II will offer gamers when it's released sometime in the first quarter next year: First and foremost, Activision assures us that it will have all of the benefits of the PC version plus the addition of entirely new levels and redesigned existing ones as well. As to how many new levels or the final level count, we'll have to wait, but it will fall into the same range as the PC version. In addition, Quake II PSX will feature fluid particle effects, mobile lighting, a fast and fluid frame rate, Dual Shock and Analog control, the ability to save whenever and often, plus two and four-player Deathmatch capabilities. We were not able to confirm as to whether or not the four player Deathmatch is via a multi-tap and a quarter split-screen or through the link-up cable, but we're betting on the former. At this point, Activision has only been able to offer up the few screen shots you see on these pages. As usual, id will only release the game when they feel it's ready — and no sooner. Activision is planning for Quake II to hit retail sometime between January and March. We'll keep you posted.

GREG



Chris



Who you
callin'
a pussy?



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syphon filter



989 Studios has an impressive roster of titles in their stable. In addition to their award-winning sport titles — GameDay, ShootOut, Face Off, Rally Cross, Cool Boarders 3, etc. — they also have a few stand-out entertainment games as well, such as Twisted Metal 3, Bust a Groove and, my personal favorite, a killer espionage action/adventure thriller by the name of Syphon Filter.

Syphon Filter is actually the name of a top-secret, deadly bio-genetic virus that has been created and programmed to kill selectively. If it's unleashed into the general populace, millions will die. That's where you, as counter-terrorist Gabriel Logan, come into play. You've been assigned to this suicide mission with the sole objective of stopping the heinous act of biological terrorism on our U.S. soil. To do this, you must infiltrate the organization responsible for creating the deadly virus and bring down its leaders.

As Gabriel Logan, you'll have an impressive array of gadgets and weaponry at your disposal. From a standard 9 mm pistol and an M16 semi-automatic, to a sniper rifle and grenade launcher, you won't be without some kind of firepower at your side. Even if you exhaust your ammunitions, there's always the handy-dandy taser gun, which shoots out enough electricity into your enemies that they eventually burst into flames. In addition to your arsenal, Gabe has a host of moves that will help him get out of the trickiest — and stickiest — of situations. Gabe can run, crouch and walk, roll, climb, grapple (while shooting one-handed) and reload on the fly. He also carries a flashlight which allows him to illuminate dark rooms and corridors. Gabe isn't exactly alone on his missions, either. At any given time, he might be contacted by his partner, Mei-Xing Lee, and given

EXCLUSIVE



a new set of objectives to accomplish. She will also supply him with incidental information such as maps, the locations of his targets and clues, if he starts to go off the beaten path.

The gameplay in Syphon Filter is a great combination of action — shooting, dodging bullets, climbing through windows, etc. — and mission-based puzzle solving. In any given level, you might be called on to carry out a variety of different objectives. In the first level, for example, Gabriel must find and locate a bomb somewhere deep within the subway system. But, first, he has to locate and throw a circuit breaker to get the power back on, in order to open the subway gates. In addition, he also has to find a bad guy by the name of Kravitch and take him and his communication array out. While doing that, another objective pops up on screen telling him to follow some of his fellow comrades into a dark building and provide cover fire while they dismantle another bomb. As you can see, the action is very fast-paced and there is plenty of shooting going on at all times. While it's not quite fair to

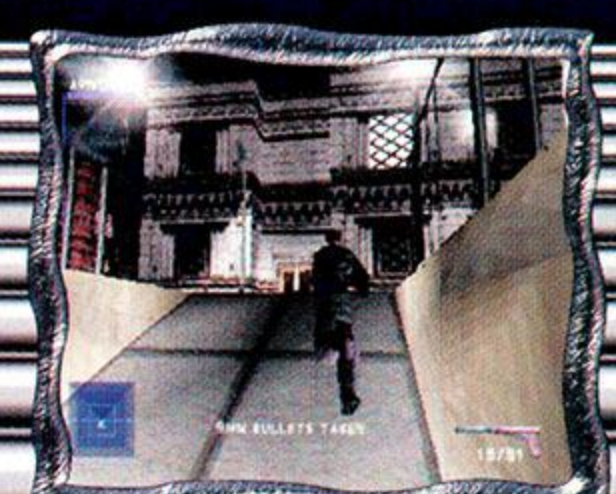
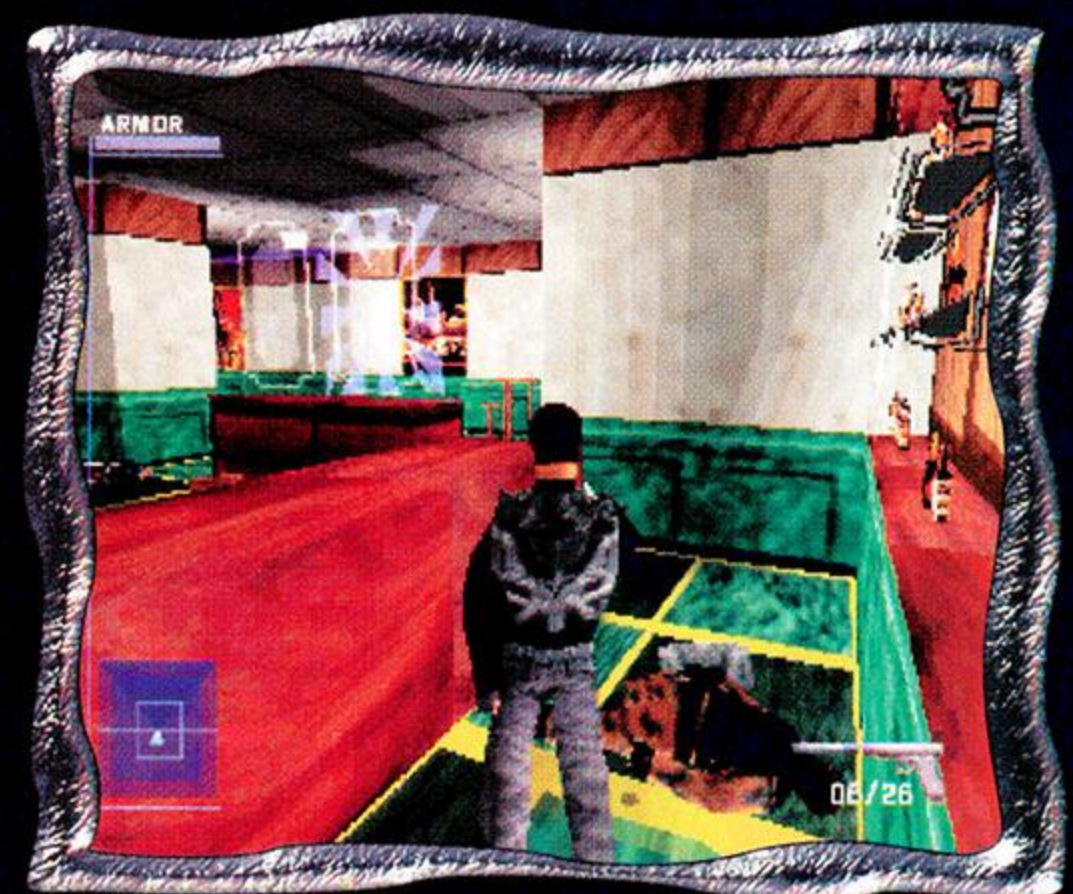


lump Syphon Filter into any category or comparison, it's closest cousins would be Metal Gear Solid and Goldeneye — that's pretty good company.

Some of the other features you can expect to see in this game run from the ability to shoot and damage most of your environments — from windows and street lights to parked cars; a host of costume changes for Gabe — tuxedo, parka, combat gear; and incredible graphic effects — such as color cycling, particle effects and ambient lighting.

If you ask me, 989 Studios has a potentially huge hit on their hands. The game has a great 3D engine, the gameplay seems to be a perfect blend of action, exploration and puzzle solving, and the storyline is intriguing and suspenseful. At this time, you can expect to see the game ship between February and March. Until it hits, rest assured we'll have plenty more shots and information in these hallowed pages.

GREG



SHAOLIN



It is the end of the 18th Century, during the decline of the mighty Ch'ing Dynasty. You are a young orphan in Canton Province, China, about to embark on a lifetime of martial arts adventure... This is the setting for Shao Lin, THQ's upcoming 3D fighter that gives you the chance to star in your own Hong Kong Kung Fu movie. Set against the beautiful backdrops of ancient China, players will be pit against hordes of enemies, often attacking in seemingly unfair numbers. It will be up to you, as a Shao Lin disciple, to choose your path wisely — remaining true to the Shao Lin code, in an effort to fulfill your destiny before it's too late.

One of the unique things about this 3D fighter is that it incorporates RPG elements into the fighting mix. As you progress through the ranks, your character will be faced with a variety of decisions. Dependent on the choices you make, as well as the battles you win and lose, your character will mature, take on different characteristics and even learn new fighting styles of Kung Fu. How this actually translates into game-play is still to be determined, as of yet, we haven't received a playable version of the game.



Another one of Shao Lin's firsts will be its four player simultaneous fighting mode. With the recent cancellation of Virgin's controversial Thrill Kill, Shao Lin will receive the dubious distinction of being the first 3D fighting game to incorporate four character fighting on-screen at once, via the Multi-tap. THQ claims that, even with all four characters filling the screen, the frame rate moves at a brisk pace, allowing fast and furious fighting sequences reminiscent of those kooky Hong Kong Kung Fu movies you can catch on cable every weekend.

In addition to the RPG elements and the multiplayer fighting, some of the other features you can expect to see in Shao Lin range from six accurately represented martial arts fighting styles, with move libraries that grow as your character matures, to art direction from renowned anime artist Hirotoishi Sano, whose prominent works include Gundam 0083, Bounty Dog, The Vision of Eshflowne and NAZCA. Shao Lin is being developed by Polygon Magic and is scheduled to ship in Spring.

greg



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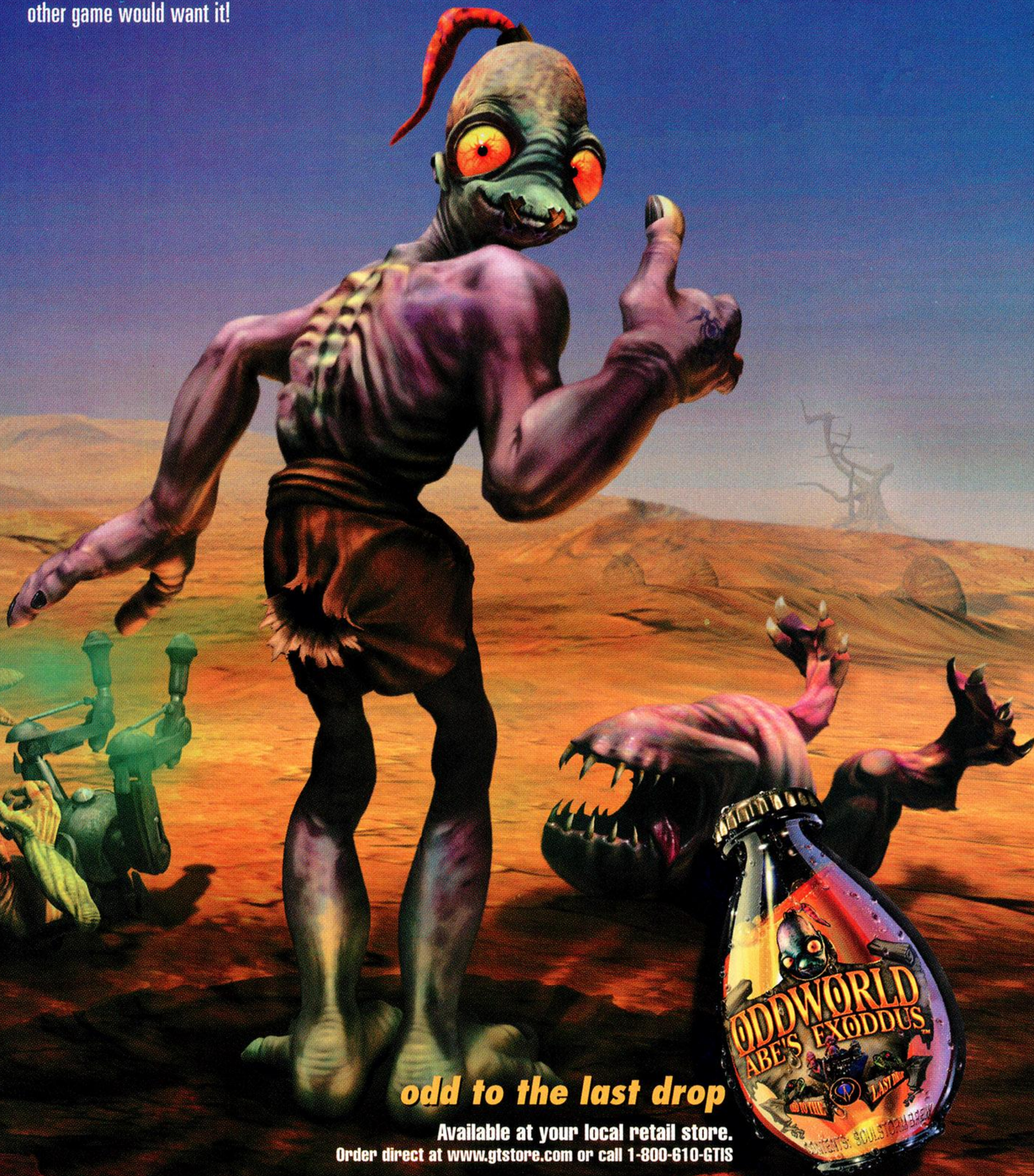
Abe gets all emotional! More panic! More talking! More pleading!



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Other heroes have swords, chainsaws, and vaporizers to deal with their monstrous enemies. In Oddworld, all you've got is gas. Abe now has the ability to possess his own farts and blow his enemies away! It's a power he's going to need if he's going to stop the Glukkon Meat Barons from making Soulstorm Brew - the only beverage made from real Mudokon tears and bones. Fart possession. No other game has it and frankly, we're not sure any other game would want it!



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Spotlight on:

KIDS GAMES!

Let's face it, parents whose toddlers like to draw on the family room wall with Crayolas, while eating peanut butter with their fingers, aren't really thinking about buying them a PlayStation so they can play Resident Evil and Metal Gear Solid. On the other side of the coin, Sony Computer Entertainment and the PlayStation have been branded, since day one, as the "hip, young, edgy, next generation system", appealing to 18 to 34 year-old adult males while leaving the kid-stuff for Nintendo. But, as the years have passed, and hardware prices have dropped ever closer to that magical, mass-market \$99.00 price tag, the PS age demographic has dropped as well. As a testament to this fact of life, this year plays the host to the first few PlayStation video games geared toward younger adolescents. The games you see listed below are being developed with kids in mind; with age groups ranging anywhere from preschoolers to the pre-teen group.



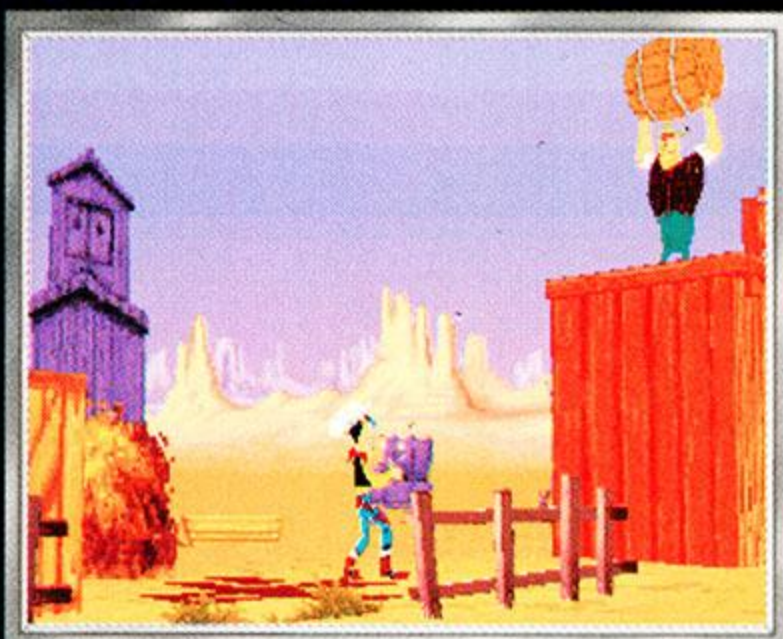
THQ: RUGRATS — DECEMBER — RETAIL PRICE: \$39.99-\$49.99

Prepare for an onslaught of Rugrats-related stuff this Holiday Season and the PlayStation video game of the same name, developed by N-Space and published by THQ (in conjunction with Sony), is at the top of the list. In the game, players will get the chance to play as their favorite Rugrat toddler and reenact some of the mega-popular Nickelodeon cartoon series' greatest episodes — in sparkling 3D. The PlayStation game is a third-person action/adventure that puts you in search of Reptar, their favorite Barney-esque Dinosaur. This quest will find the kids tackling 20 different levels, which are all based on actual scenes, environments and episodes of the series. In addition, all of the characters' voices are done by the same voice actors from the show, adding another dimension of realism and familiarity to the game. While the gameplay and graphics might be a bit tame and simplistic for teens and adults, Rugrats: the videogame will instantly appeal to boys and girls ages six through 12.



INFOGRADES: LUCKY LUKE — NOVEMBER — RETAIL PRICE: \$19.99

Young buckaroos can now gun-sling and brawl with the best of cowboys alongside their new 2D hero, Lucky Luke, in an adventurous, fast-paced gallop across the Wild West. Along with Sony, THQ, Atlus and NewKidCo, Infogrames is seeking to cash in on the PlayStation's untapped younger gameplaying audience. With Saturday morning cartoon-style 2D graphics and simplified arcade game mechanics, players will take control of a hero set on righting the wrongs done by the bad guys. Riding his trusty horse into town, Luke engages in one mad-capped adventure after another. This animated title features seventeen levels of gun-slinging fun, including railroad train chases, saloon brawls, high-stakes card games, quick-draw gun fights and mine-shaft, rail car chases. Lucky Luke is being targeted mostly for boys ten years old and under.



EXCLUSIVE

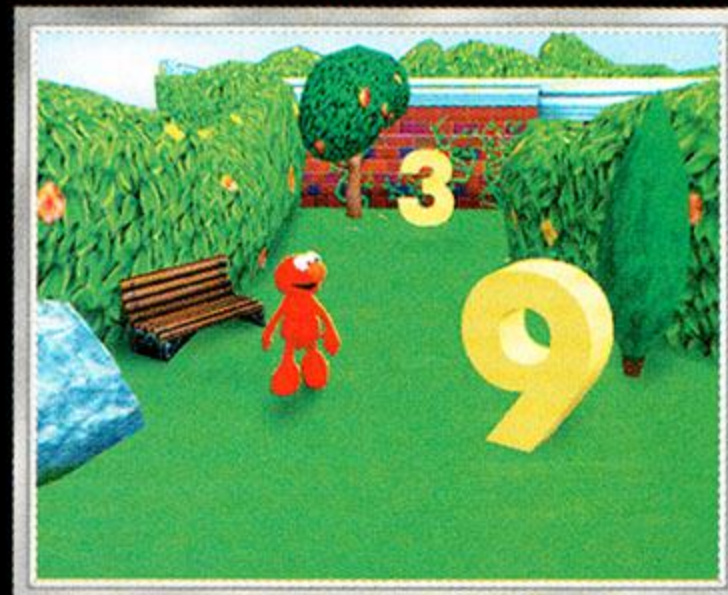
NEWKIDCO: ELMO'S LETTER ADVENTURE AND ELMO'S NUMBER JOURNEY — NOVEMBER — RETAIL PRICE: \$39.95



In a definite PlayStation first, NewKidCo is set to introduce edutainment titles geared toward the preschool set with these two titles: Elmo's Letter Adventure and Elmo's Number Journey. Combining the accessibility and ease-of-use of the PlayStation, with the immensely popular

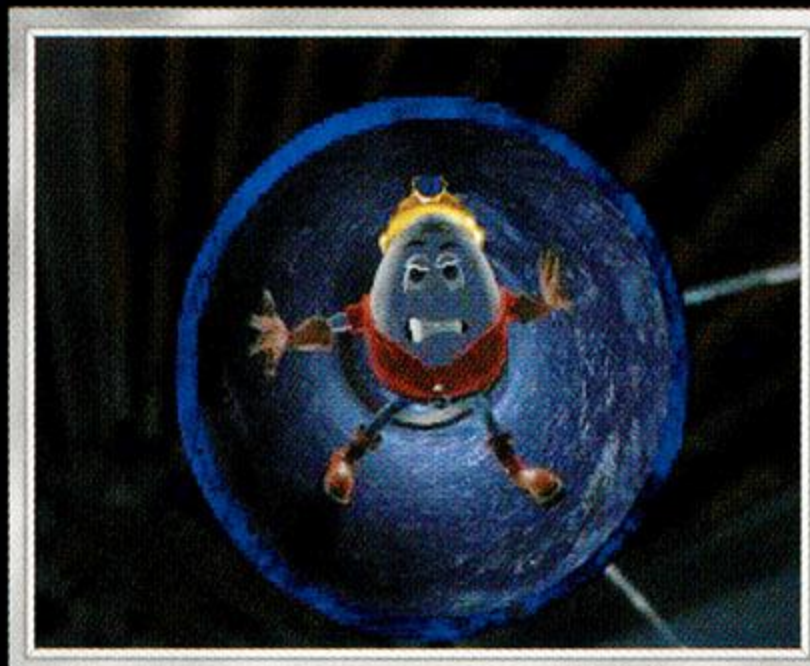
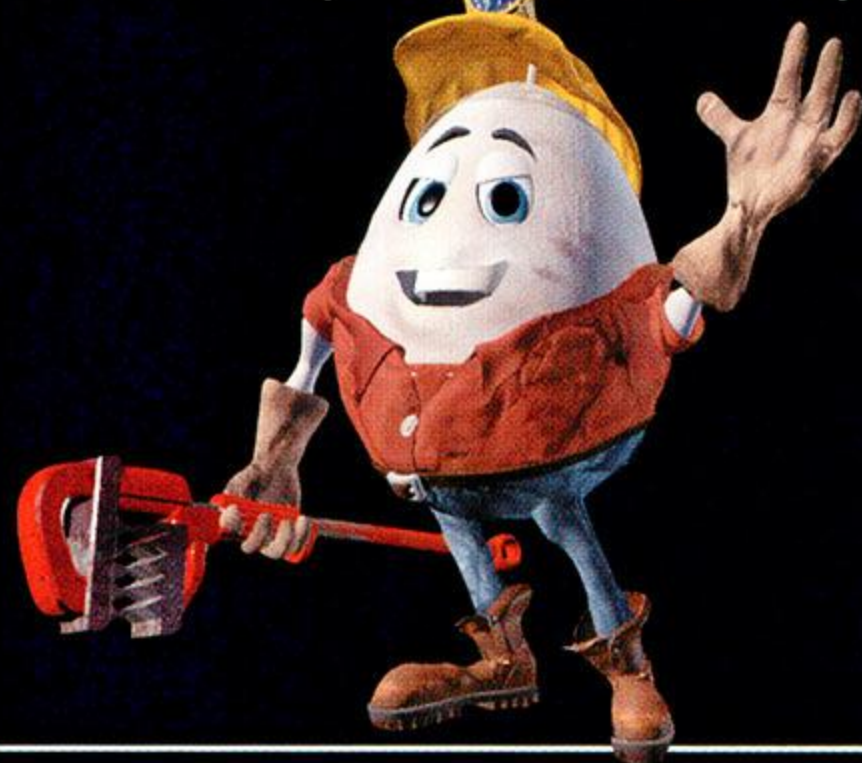
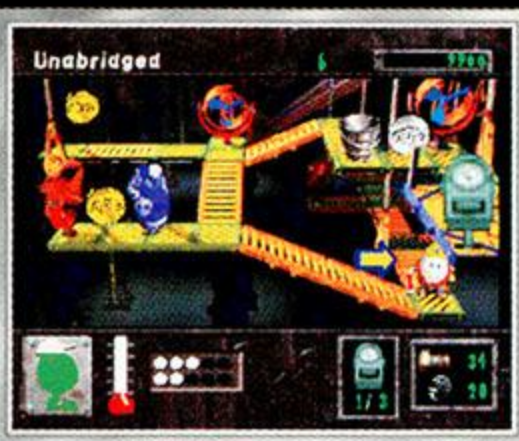
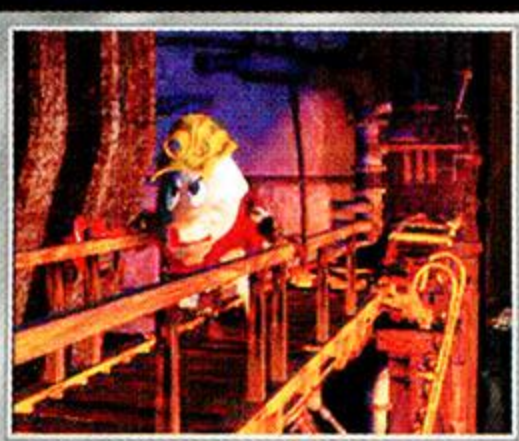


children's property that is Sesame Street, these titles could possibly bring in an entirely new audience to the console. Each of the games have been designed using a new interactive format by which younger children can learn basic counting and letter recognition skills. Children will play and learn in a variety of 3D environments with their favorite Sesame Street characters, including Elmo, Cookie Monster, The Count, Grover and Big Bird. Both titles will play like traditional video games, yet utilize simple controls for children still developing hand-eye coordination. The games will feature polygon characters in fully navigable, 3D environments, enhanced by sound and music directly from the good folks at the Television Workshop.



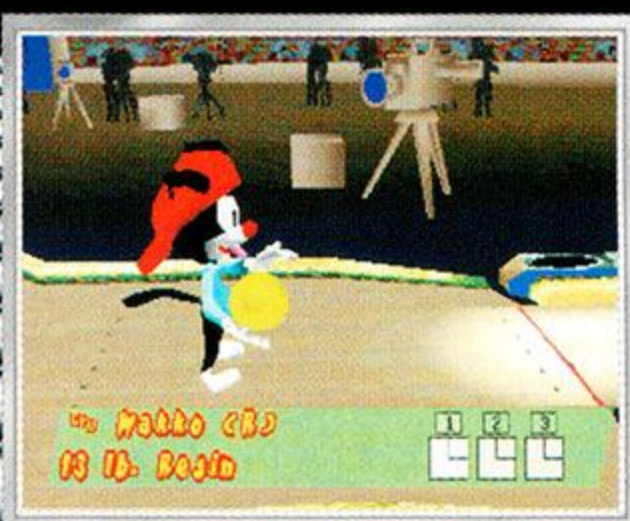
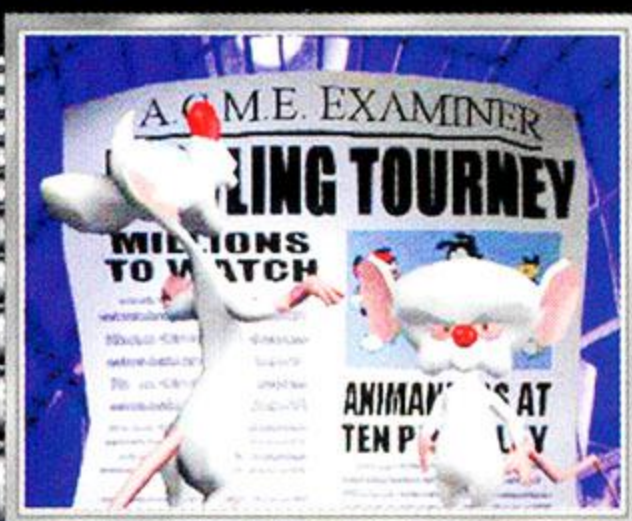
ATLUS: EGGS OF STEEL — NOVEMBER — RETAIL PRICE: \$49.95

As seen in the Exclusive section of October's issue, Atlus is releasing a game developed by special effects house Rhythm and Hues (makers of the movie Babe), titled Eggs of Steel. In the game, you control Charlie, a cartoon-like, steel-working egg who is left in charge of the steel plant where he works. In his boss's absence, things go drastically awry and it's up to you, as Charlie, to navigate through this hostile environment, with only your trusty monkey wrench and your wits, and get things back in order. Eggs of Steel features simplified, 2D graphics and a set of compelling characters that youngsters will instantly find humorous and engaging. The game play is twitch/arcade-style, with a lot of jumping, chucking bolts and throwing switches. As a result, Eggs of Steel will most likely find a home with young boys between the ages of seven to 12.



ASC GAMES: ANIMANIACS @ TEN PIN ALLEY — DECEMBER — RETAIL PRICE: \$29.95

ASC has taken the great PlayStation bowling engine they created with Ten Pin Alley a few years back, added a popular Warner Bros. Cartoon license, simplified the control scheme a bit and repackaged it as Animaniacs @ Ten Pin Alley. While the first Ten Pin was a humor-filled experience, packed with great characters and hilarious animations, it definitely had a steep learning curve and was probably too difficult for the younger set. ASC, seeing a great opportunity to keep the title alive, while capitalizing on a younger generation of gamers, has wisely done a great job of making the game easy and simple to play, while still a lot of fun to watch. Animaniacs features all of the characters from the popular cartoon series (including Pinky and the Brain) as well as a variety of wacky lanes on which to bowl. While there is still a meter for the more experienced Ten Pin Alley alumni, you can choose an option for "aim and shoot" bowling as well as fill the gutter with those foam bumpers. The graphics are again presented in 3D and the music and voices are sampled straight from the series. Animaniacs should appeal to pretty much all ages, with an emphasis on kids six to 12 years old



KAGERO™

Deception II

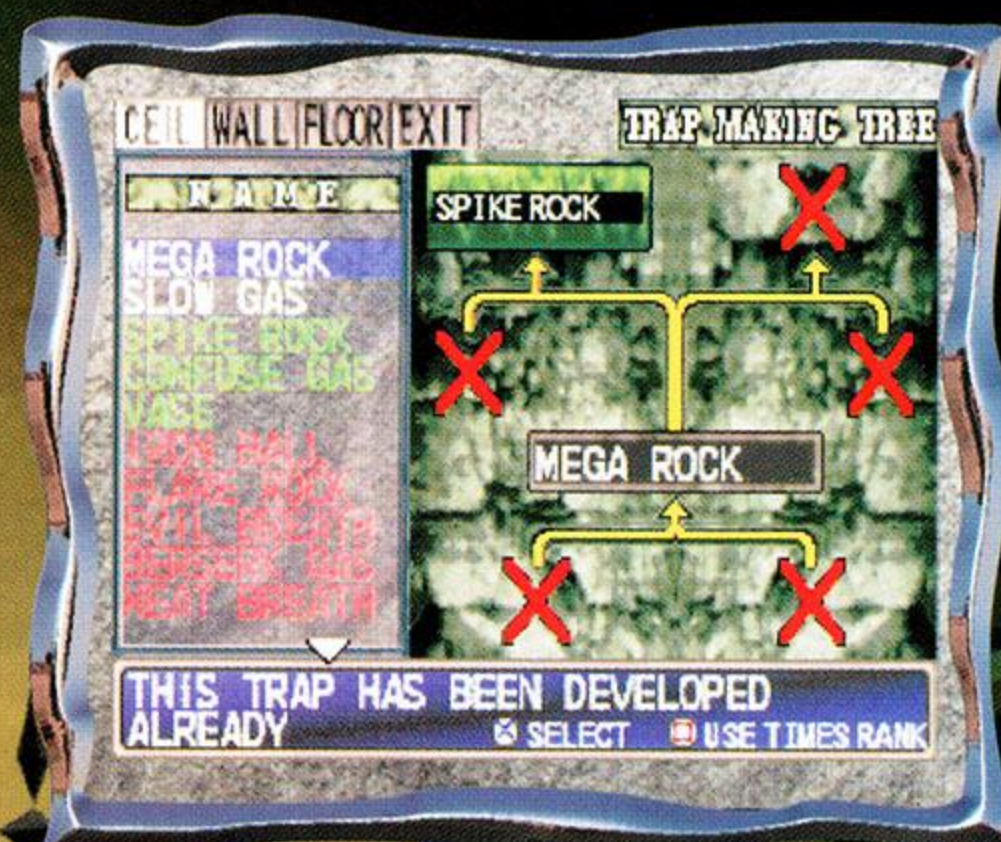


If there is one thing you can say about Tecmo, it's that they aren't afraid to break away from traditional video game genres (racing, 3D action/platformer, fighting, etc.) and release decidedly unique, potentially exciting and sometimes controversial games into the US marketplace. Last year, it was both *Monster Rancher*, a game that not only capitalized on the Tamagotchi fad, but had a lot of depth and replayability to boot and *Dead or Alive*, a 3D fighter that still lays claim to the most realistic bouncing boob physics ever found in a video game. This Holiday Season is going to bear the fruit of their next title, a sequel of sorts to yet another controversial game that was reviewed by our long gone but not forgotten (and also controversial) Zach Meston, way back in November of '96, Volume 1, Issue 12 (it received a 92% Gold rating for those of you keeping count). The first *Deception* revolved around a young man that was framed for the killing of his father (the King) and ultimately sent to his death by his brother's hand. In order to gain revenge, the young man sold his soul to the devil and was forced to spend eternity trapping and killing unwitting adventurers in the Castle of the Damned. This year, the story has taken a departure from the first and the gameplay has been improved, refined and enhanced quite a bit, as well.

The story of *Kagero: Deception II*, revolves around a young human girl named Millennia. In the game's CG intro, we see Millennia as an adolescent being accompanied by her parents to a village circus. At the circus they run into a freakish juggling clown (is it just me or do clowns and ice cream men give everybody the creeps?) who, through some sort of twisted magic, captivates and transports her to a strange castle. That's the last we see of the young innocent girl until years later, where we find her in the "employ" of a race of strange, blue-skinned creatures called Timeoids. The Timeoids are superior to the human race in just about every way. Eons ago, when the humans were feral and lived in chaos, they generously shared their infinite wisdom and ways with them. At first, the humans were grateful, and respected the Timeoids for enriching their lives. Thus, the Timeoids naturally came into power and the humans were content with their newfound peace, believing it would last forever. Of course, we humans are a greedy bunch and don't stay appeased forever. As the game opens, we find out that Millennia has been taken in by the Timeoids and groomed to become one of their race. As a test of her loyalty, she is ordered by the Timeoid King to carry out a special mission. Are the Timeoids so generous and peaceful as we're told, or do they have a hidden agenda as well? Millennia's first task is to defeat and kill any human intruders in the Timeoid's castle...

Because the humans are greedy and are looking to either kill or capitalize on the Timeoids secrets, the castle attracts an almost unlimited number of treasure-

EXTREME



seekers. Some of these invaders are fierce knights, magicians and fighters, while others are noblemen and poor saps looking for help for sickly family members. It's a dilemma for you to decide whether or not to do as you're told, by killing each and every person that enters through the doors, or let the innocent ones go to live on, and possibly come back to kill you some other time.

Killing is the inherent key to Kagero or, more exactly, how you kill. Like the first Deception, you must construct a variety of heinous traps, then lure unsuspecting explorers into them. Where the first Deception established the groundwork for this game concept, Deception II takes it to a sadistic extreme. Now you can skillfully place a variety of floor, ceiling and wall traps in strategic places and create multiple-hit combos. Say, for instance, you place a Spiked Wall — which thrusts out, stabbing and throwing the victim forward — at the foot of a set of stairs. Right underneath this Wall you place a Cold Claw — which are huge iron blades that protrude from the floor, pinning the victim's feet, while cold air gushes up and freezes the poor sap. At the top of the stairs you set a huge Iron Ball — which drops, rolls and bounces off walls, crushing victims underneath its huge weight. About five feet away from your Spiked Wall there is an Electric Chair — a stationary trap generously left behind by a benevolent Timeoid no doubt — that will send many many watts of deadly electricity coursing through your victim's body. Now, here's where the fun begins. Lure your victim over the Cold Claw, which will freeze the guy in his tracks. Next,

send the Iron Ball tumbling down the stairs, crushing the poor dude in the process. Quickly activate the Spiked Wall and you've triple combo'd the guy into next week. But wait, there's more. Adding insult to injury, the Spiked Wall has thrown the guy into the Electric Chair, frying him extra crispy-style. This is the most fun and challenging part of the game. Coming up with killer combos with your existing traps and then watching them do their bloody damage is downright wicked, a little twisted and oh so much fun.

So, how does it all work? Kagero's score system revolves around collecting as many Ark points as possible through combos and bonus points. The deadlier the combo, as well as a host of other conditions, the more Ark points you collect. Some of these conditions range from Counter Hits — when you set off a trap on an enemy who is in the process of attacking you and Double Hits — when two enemies are hit by the same trap simultaneously, to Just Kills — when a trap brings down the enemy's life bar to exactly zero — no more or no less, to Core Hits — when a trap is executed, hitting the victim square in the center. These Ark points are like money. At the end of each chapter (level), your overall performance will be scored in these points and the more you receive, the more heinous and maniacal traps you'll be able to purchase and create for your next mission.

The first Deception was played out via a DOOM-like 3D perspective, Kagero: Deception II takes the player into the third-person realm and does a great

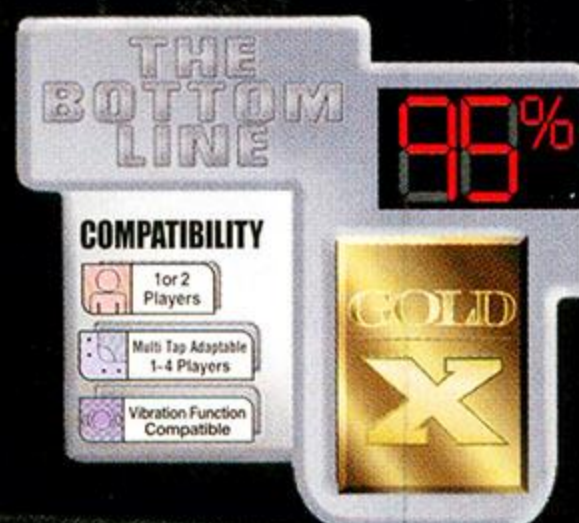




job of it, graphically. Each of the characters and enemies are comprised of detailed polygons, with a lot of attention applied to their faces. It's especially satisfying to watch your victims get pummeled by your multiple traps, and the developers at Tecmo Japan have ensured that you get to watch the gory details from a variety of angles. Once you've sent an enemy beyond this mortal coil, a large pool of blood seeps out from underneath his/her body. The game constantly streams the graphics data from room to room so, once you've entered a level, there are basically no load times whatsoever. The trap set-up screens overlay a green grid across the entire room you happen to be in, and you are able to rotate the screen, as well as zoom in and out at will. Lastly, the music is also worth mentioning, as its eerie haunting melodies and moody dirges are a perfect fit with the game's dark and evil atmosphere.

While maybe not the most appropriate title to grace our Holiday cover and not for the younger kids, Tecmo's *Kagero: Deception II* is a heck of a great game and one that should not be missed. Blending addicting strategy, plenty of action, an intriguing and moral-questioning storyline with pure unadulterated fun, this title easily achieves its Gold status. Make sure you don't let this game pass you by unnoticed underneath the deluge of Christmas titles coming out between now and December 25th.

greg



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FUTURE.PLAY

ASTEROIDS

ACTIVISION • DECEMBER

Get ready for yet another walk down retro-lane, Activision's upcoming PlayStation version of Asteroids is a 32-bit remake of the classic that most of us have played and grew up with since the early eighties. This '98 update recaptures the non-stop dodging and firing of the original, while taking the classic game to an all-new level, with vivid and colorful polygonal graphics, enhanced game play, expansive playing areas and dynamic sound effects. In addition to the original vector Asteroids hidden in the game, the new Asteroids will feature a bevy of different Inter-Galactic Game Zones — basically different space environments with their own set of hazards, such as a Black Hole world with a deadly gravitational pull and a world where hostile suns shoot deadly arching flames. There are also bosses to tackle, a variety of ships from which to choose, CG-rendered cinematic cut-scenes, a bigger variety of enemies, over and above the traditional floating rocks and saucers, and secondary weapons, such as laser nets, repulsor shields, shock waves and gun satellites.



BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD

GT INTERACTIVE • MARCH

While not as big and controversial as they were a few years back (thanks to our friends in South Park, Co.), Beavis and Butt-Head still garner a few chuckles when we catch them late at night on MTV. GT Interactive is helping keep the franchise alive with the first PlayStation B&B video game titled, Beavis and Butt-Head: Get Big in Hollywood. The basic story behind the game unleashes the two teenage terrors loose in La La Land (they should fit in just fine), where they have just finished filming their latest movie. In this adventure, Beavis and Butt-Head will be rendered in 3D for the first time and players will be able to control each character's speech throughout all of the game's levels. While we haven't had a playable version of the game yet, we've been told that B&B will focus on the humor of the series while giving players an action-filled 3D romp. Because it's still early-on in development, we should have plenty more info on the game, including a hands-on preview in the months to come.



EXPECTING

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FUTURE PLAY

BRIGANDINE

ATLUS • NOVEMBER

Atlus is continuing their trend of translating and releasing Japanese RPGs and strategy/RPGs into the US marketplace. Their latest acquisition, Brigandine, brings together the best elements of Ogre Battle and Dragon Force to deliver a very promising fantasy tactical simulation. Featuring fully polygonal 3D battle scenes, proportionably sized, realistic-looking characters, over 30 hours of game-play for each of the five characters you'll control, multiple class changes (even for monster characters) and a host of side quests and sub-plots to engage in, Brigandine is looking to be the definitive strategy role playing game. The story takes place in a kingdom called Armekia, which had brought peace to the country by finally defeating a neighboring enemy. Unfortunately, the tranquility was quickly shattered, as the King of Armekia is assassinated by one of his own admirals. As the Prince, you are the only survivor of the kingdom and it's up to you to rally your own armies and take on the new, self-proclaimed ruler of Armekia. Brigandine looks to be a very deep and detailed tactical simulation. The review copy came in as we were going to press and, due to the amount of game-play it has, we are holding off for the review until next issue.

FINAL FANTASY VIII

SQUARE EA • 3RD QTR '99

Final Fantasy was a huge success for both Square and Sony last year. The combination of Square's immense talent and know-how to create and combine a dramatic story and strategic battles with jaw-dropping, CG-rendered cinematics and puzzle solving, produced one of '97's best PlayStation titles. In '99, Square is looking to repeat their success once again, with an even better-looking sequel that is set to debut sometime toward the end of next year. The screens you see here were taken from the playable demo which should be packed-in with their upcoming action/RPG, Brave Fencer Musashi. While the storyline is still being fleshed out, it's apparent that Square is placing an even greater emphasis on the graphics, with more realistic-looking characters and even bigger special effects. At this point, the battle sequences remain pretty much the same, although there is no option for using Materia. It was recently confirmed at this year's Tokyo Game Show that FFXVIII will incorporate the new PocketStation, although exactly how is yet unknown. Maybe you'll get to breed your own Chocobos. While the game is still a ways out, in terms of its release date, the playable demo is certainly enough to whet your appetite.



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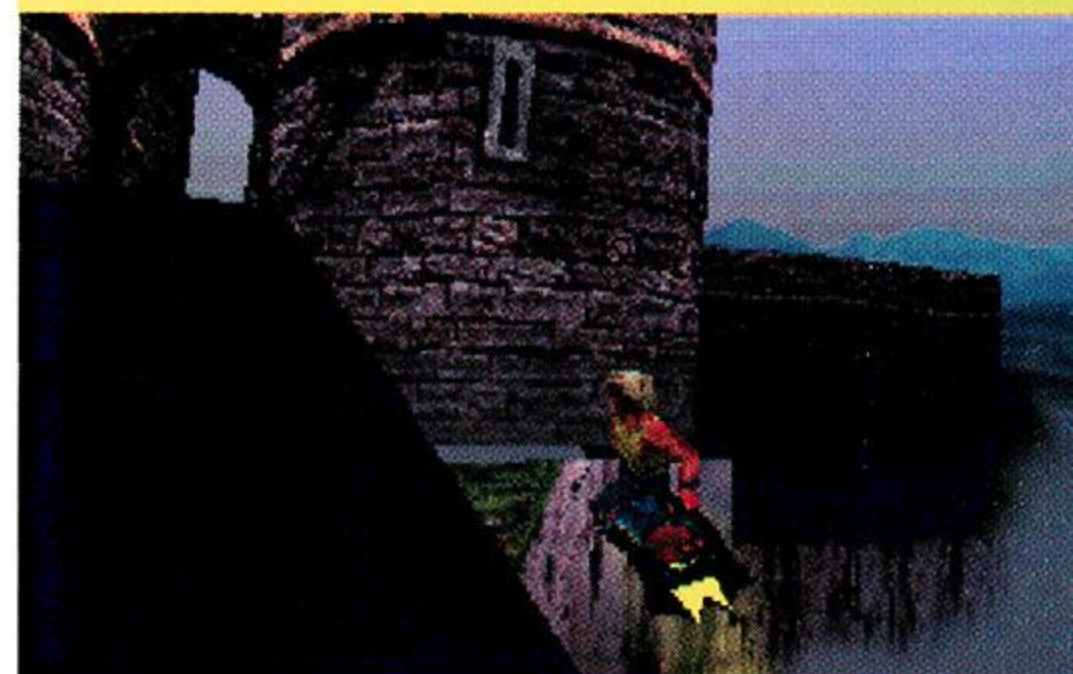
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JACKIE CHAN

MIDWAY • MARCH

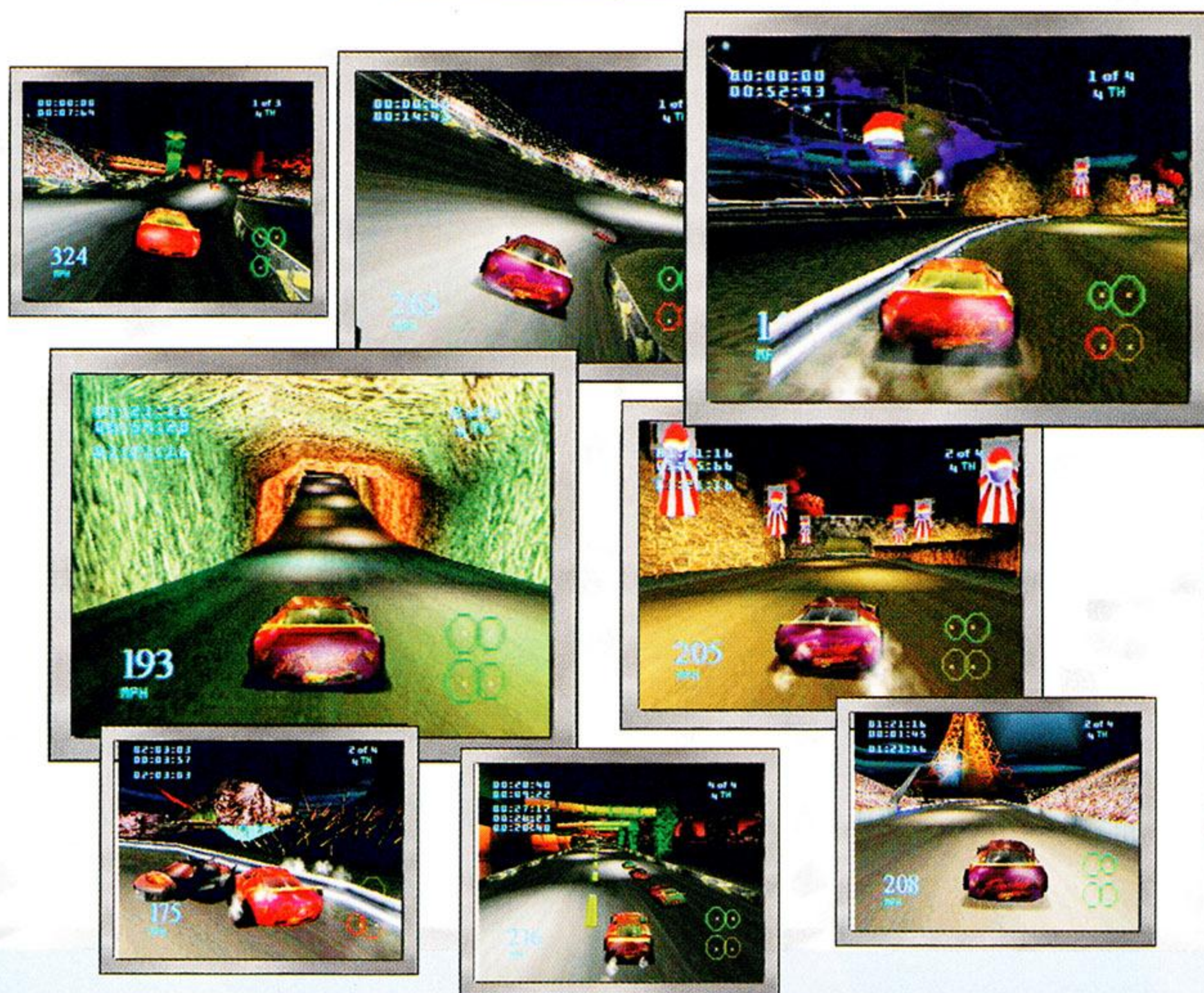
Midway/Radical Entertainment's "Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster" is shaping up to be a cool action/fighting game. The latest version we received showcased two levels: the streets and rooftops of Chinatown and a subway level where you are jumping from car to car and ducking under and around oncoming pipes. The developers at Radical have done a great job of capturing the kung fu master's persona on-screen. This is largely due to the fact that he was motion-captured for all of the moves in the game. In Stuntmaster, Jackie has to break out all of his fighting moves to stay one step ahead of the onslaught of baddies looking to take him on. Besides his fists and feet, he can use and interact with just about anything in the level as a deadly weapon, just as he does in the movies. In addition, he will have to make a variety of death-defying leaps, climb up and over buildings and hop from canopy to canopy in order to survive. The graphics are done in a unique mix of flat-shaded and textured 3D polygons and Jackie will spout a bevy of one-liners, a la Gex. Look for the game come March.



JEFF GORDON RACING

ASC GAMES • MARCH

The nice people at ASC Games recently stopped by to give us a preview look at their new racing title, Jeff Gordon Racing. If you're a fan of NASCAR racing, then you don't need to be told who Jeff Gordon is. The 27 year old wonder-driver is taking checkered flags (on the Winston Cup circuit) faster than any driver in the history of the sport. And, as luck (or design) would have it, Jeff is also an avid game player, so his input into the game has been useful ("Put a steep bank over on turn four"). Actually, the tracks in Jeff Gordon Racing are not of the variety that he's used to; no, JGR is designed to be more of a futuristic, arcade style racing game, with serious speed, big jumps, and lots of air. The backgrounds are all dark, and the buildings, signs, and other cars all rush by in a semi-apocalyptic neon haze of yellows, blues and reds. The cars, however, all maintain a realistic amount of earthly physics, and the early sound f/x will peel the paint off of your walls! Cool! Stay tuned for more info on JGR in upcoming issues of everybody's favorite mag, PSExtreme.



EXPECTING

RAYMAN 2

UBI SOFT • MARCH

Ubi Soft is just getting started on the conversion of Rayman 2 for the PlayStation. Already way ahead in development on the PC (which are the screens you see here) and N64, the PS team was recently assembled and shipped over to China, where they are currently hard at work. As you can tell, Rayman 2 takes the game into the third dimension, bringing the colorful cartoon world of the armless and legless dude to life. The sequel will retain a lot of the play mechanics, overall flavor and vivid and colorful look of the original, while implementing a whole new set of gameplay elements (similar to Mario 64) in a 3D world. Some of the environments we've seen so far show Rayman climbing a huge, half-sunken pirate ship, swimming in deep water, grabbing air bubbles left behind by a huge whale, and traversing dark, goo-filled, underground caverns, where he must light explosive kegs of gunpowder then use them to propel himself from platform to platform. In addition, Rayman will have to get around in a few unique ways, such as waterskiing and riding a rollercoaster-style device. From the demonstrations we've been given of the PC and N64 versions, it's evident that there is a level of graphic quality here that has not been matched by any other 3D action/platform title. If the PlayStation visuals can even come close to the other platforms, Ubi Soft just might have a major hit on their hands. Expect to see a lot more of Rayman 2 in our pages between now and its release next year, including a special feature where we visit the game's developers in China.



SHADOW MADNESS

CRAVE • FEBRUARY

Crave's RPG, Shadow Madness, is looking to take on Square's Final Fantasy series. Mixing CG cinema with 3D environments and turn-based battles, it's just possible that they might give them a run for their money. The game revolves around a brash, young man named Stinger who is thrown together with five other characters, in an effort to discover the cure for a plague called Shadow Madness (which is killing their friends and families at an alarming pace). This motley crew must overcome numerous challenges to solve the mystery of the disease before they fall prey to it as well. Their journey will encompass over 75 major areas, with a highly interactive world offering a variety of useful items (tools, weapons, etc.) and requiring skills such as lock picking and puzzle solving. In addition, Shadow Madness sports a fast-paced, turn-based battle engine, which offers the choice of short-range, long-range and magic attacks. Developed completely in America by Craveyard Studios (which is made up of ex-Square USA employees), Shadow Madness is scheduled to be released in February of next year.

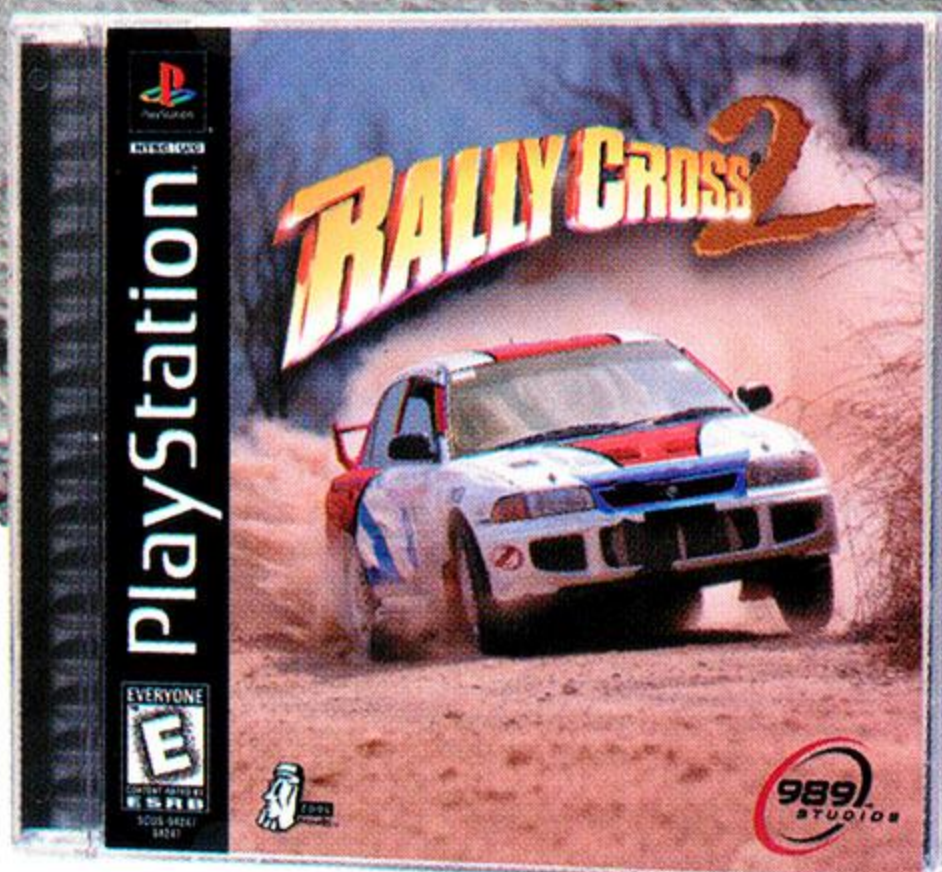
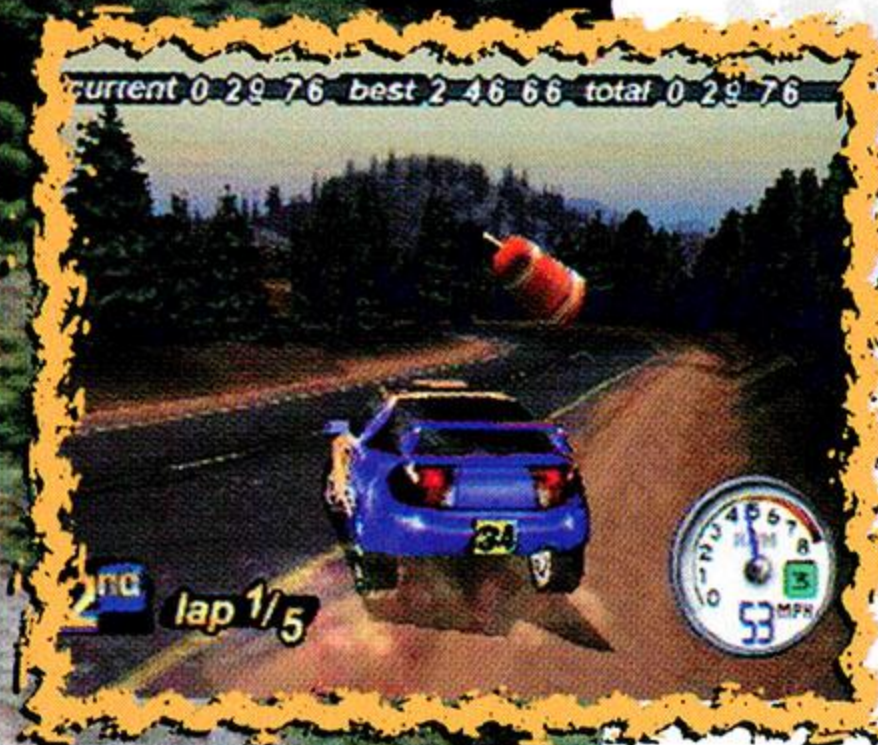


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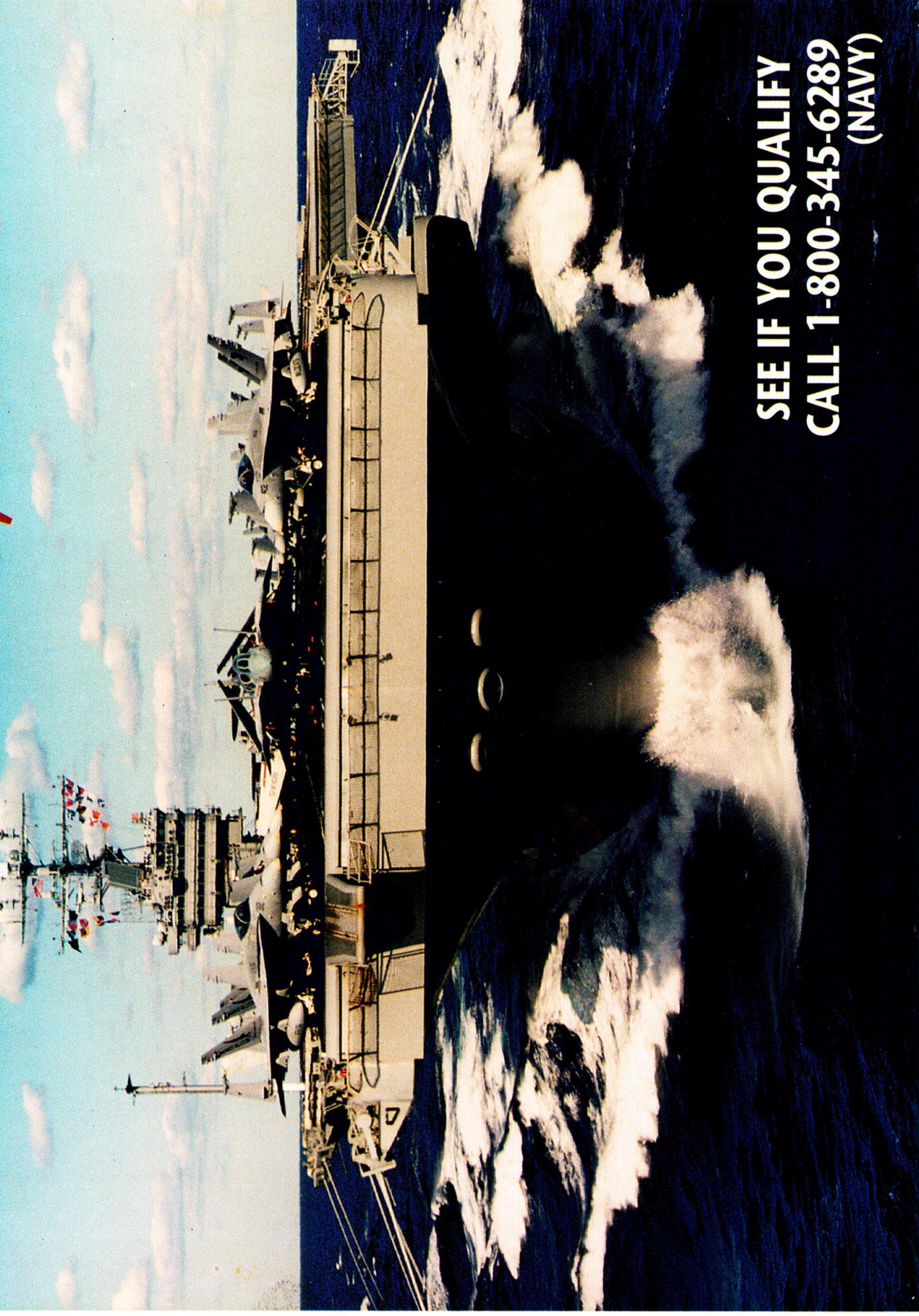
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SPORTS



EDITORIAL

As Hot Shots Golf claimed the top grid of TV monitors last month, so it shall this time around. I've finally opened up all of the courses (and won the bonus course), but I still have three more guys to get in the "Vs." mode (and it looks as if this may take awhile — Daryl seems to birdie every hole, and even made a hole-in-one against me!). Speaking of getting all of the players and opening up each of the courses, the subject of 'cheat codes' and the like pops into mind. I've never been a fan of cheat codes that allow you access to all of the game features that would normally be obtained through the course of actually PLAYING the game. For instance, there are codes available for Hot Shots that would allow me to play on any course and use any of the ten characters. But, why would I want to use these codes? It completely diminishes the reason to play the game, and thus makes the experience nowhere near as enjoyable as it should be. As an example of this, I offer the following scenario: Just the other day, a good friend of ours, who works for one of the major game developers, stopped by to see what was going on. As would be the case, I was playing a round of Hot Shots. I said, "Is this just a great game, or what?" and he casually replied, "It's all right. I've played all of the courses and used all of the different characters — it's OK". And, I, being the even-keeled sort, just about lost it. "How could you have won all of those tournaments, beat all of the guys in Vs mode, spent a ton of hours playing it, and say that it's simply 'OK'!!!!!" His reply was, "Oh, I didn't beat it, I used the cheat codes". Well, there you have it. He didn't have to earn anything, therefore his overall experience was less than satisfying. That's no secret, is it? Would Gran Turismo have been such a great racing experience if SCEA just gave you every car, every track, and

every license? I don't think so. It's that whole liberal notion of "Hey, it's OK, you're not really good enough to (fill in the blank... have this job, go to this school, earn this income, beat this game) but we'll let you have it/do it anyway because we don't want you to have to WORK to get something. Oh no, that would actually take effort and determination, and we can't have that! Anyway, the bottom line here is that you get out of a game what you put into it, and then, at the end, you can judge if the game was any good or not. And, as is the case here at Dimension Publishing, that's the way we do reviews. We don't play one or two games into a season, and we don't play half of Tomb Raider before we make our evaluations — we play as close to the whole darn thing as possible! So, keep that in mind next time you compare one of our reviews to those found in another magazine!

Stepping down from the soap box for a moment, it looks as if the ESPN line of games from Radical Entertainment (NBA Tonight, NHL Tonight, and the snowboarding gig) have all been scrapped (even though they were all finished!). EA bought the rights to publish some of Radical's non-sports titles, but ESPN apparently pulled the plug on the sports games (so you'll never get to hear "boo-yah" after a dunk). And, just like the real NBA season, the hoops titles from 989 and EA Sports have been pushed back until next month! Later.

Eric

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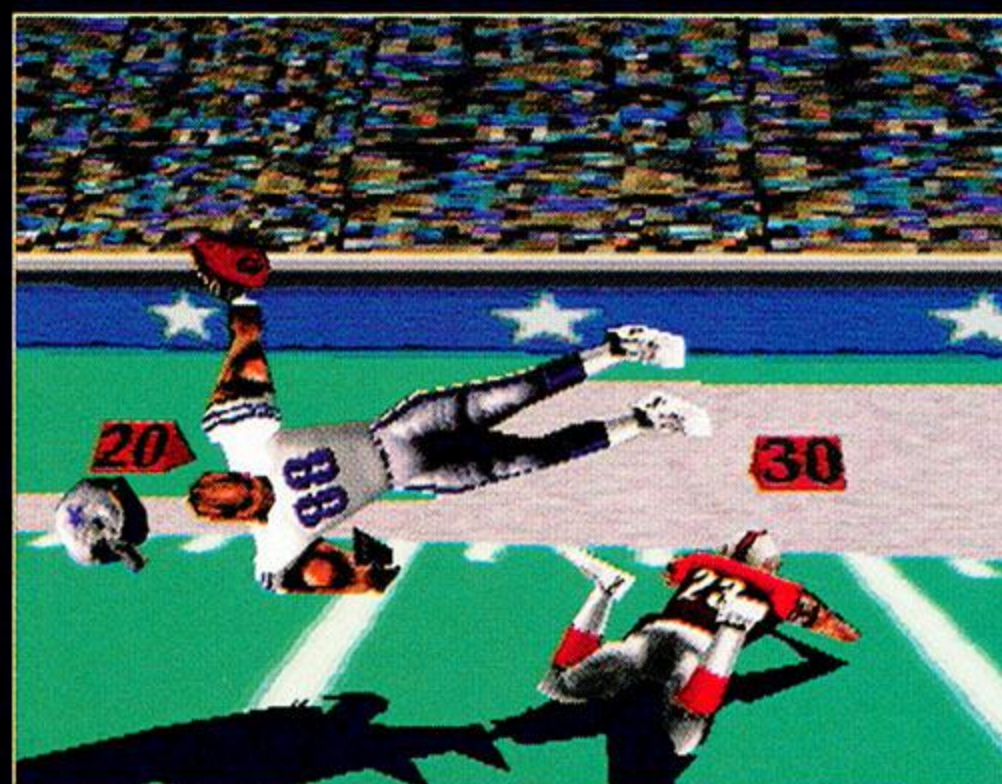
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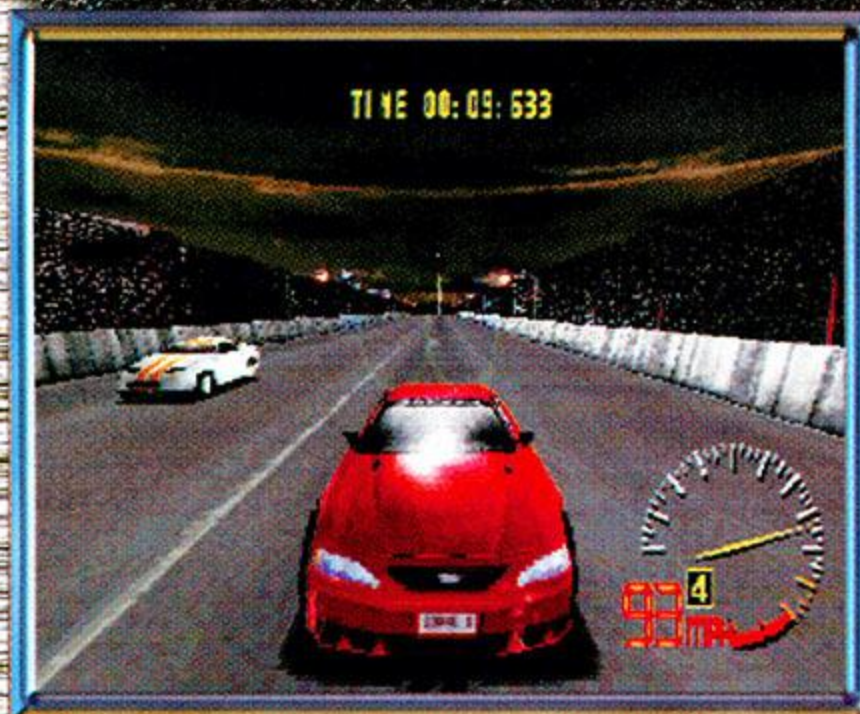


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TEST DRIVE 5



To briefly recap (in case you missed last month's Cover Story), here's what you get with Test Drive 5; 40 licensed cars, 17 different tracks (14 of which can be raced backward), 512x240 hi-res mode, a 'hip' soundtrack, and a ton of different ways to play the game. The different race options include six different Cups (win the Cup and open up new tracks and cars), a single race (win it and open up a track or car), drag race, and Cop Chase (get this by winning the ERA Cup). The Cop Chase is a blast, but more on that later. That just about covers it (although you should still read the entire piece just to get the big picture).



Even though a hundred racing games have been released for the PlayStation over the last three years, they can basically be lumped into four different categories; F1 simulation (Psygnosis has this area covered), arcade (Moto Racer, Ridge Racer and all the clones), and the arcade/simulation hybrids (Gran Turismo and GTR). The fourth category, you wonder? Well, this would be the category that Test Drive originated and Need for Speed joined a few years later — that of the "licensed supercar/muscle car, cop chasing, check point based, mind blowing racing experience" category (you probably guessed that, right?). Yes, there really is no other term for it, and no other games can legitimately be put into this group — it's a two title race, and it will always be a two title race. Both the Test Drive series and the Need for Speed titles have been so good that for anyone else to jump into the mix would be crazy, just crazy!



Well, Test Drive 5 has just raised the bar to unprecedented heights. I'm almost ready to type the words "greatest racing game ever", but I'll have to refrain from that for the moment.

First of all, TD5 is nearly flawless. All of the areas that were suspect in TD4 have been fixed, and the control (either analog or digital — I prefer digital) is so finely tuned that you'll find yourself making some of the most amazing lane changes and avoiding crashes like nothing you've been able to do before. The courses go flying by at an almost even 30 fps and, when your car reaches top speed, it's on-the-edge-of-your-seat excitement. The 3D collisions are truly spectacular, and you'll find yourself shouting some phrase (that is unfit to print) time and time again. How's this for a scenario; you're driving your '68 1/2 Mustang 428CJ at 170, while on either side of you are five other guys all going similar speeds. There's a cop



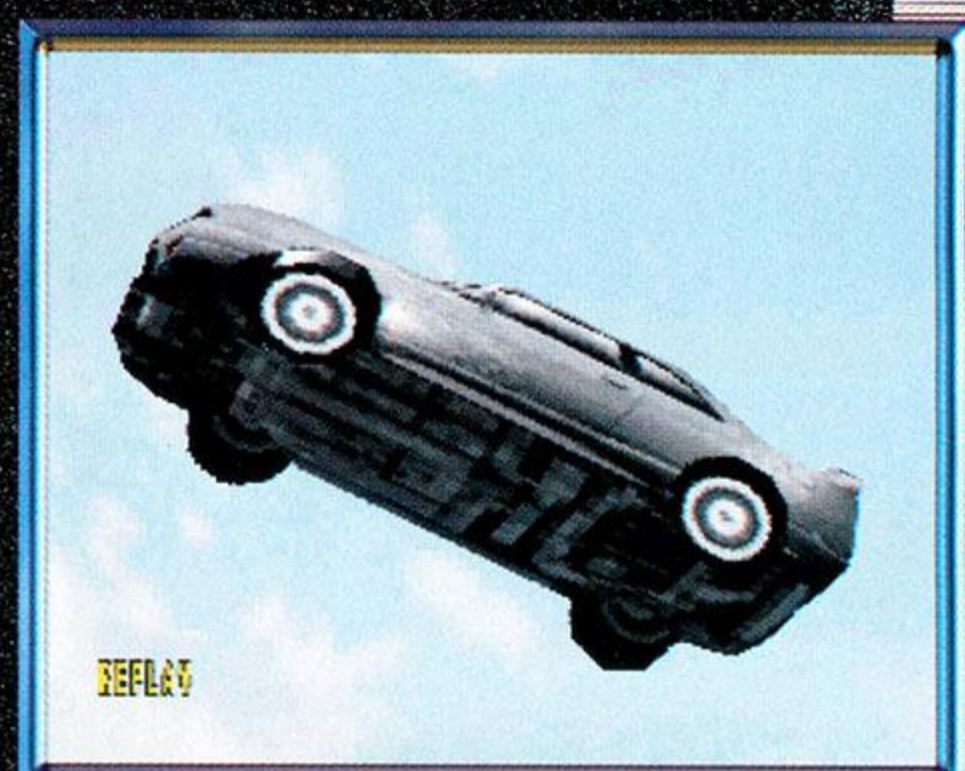


coming up from behind, sirens screaming. Up ahead are three Sunday drivers, all cruising at a fraction of your speed. You look to go in between a couple of them. At the same time, the '98 Corvette decides he wants to be in that lane, as well. You get the jump on it and nudge him into one of the oncoming cars. You hit the look behind button and watch as eight cars and a cop all smash into each other and literally go flying through the air! Unbelievable! The game is a continuous white-knuckle experience, and that is due to the random nature of the other vehicles you're racing against. You never know what awaits you as you round a corner — it could be a three car pile-up that finds you becoming the fourth! You've always got to be on your toes, and the replay value is obviously endless, as the races are never the same twice.

You may recall that NFS III added a pursuit mode where the cops (one, two, three at a time) would chase you down and try to end your day. Well, TD5 has met the challenge and gone one better — YOU get to play the role of the cop. Choose from different police cruisers and then try and stop as many of the drivers (six) as you can. Much like a game from long ago, "Chase HQ" from Taito, the idea is to ram into the suspect until his power bar is depleted (usually four or five smacks), or you can take him out quickly by spinning him out. You can select Cop Chase once you've won the Era Cup, and you can choose any available course to run it. A great new feature, certainly, but TD5 would be just as much fun to play even if Cop Chase were not included. The sound f/x in TD5 are fantastic, and easily the best engine noises ever put into a video game. All of the cars have their own sound, and the sound of slamming the gears back into first after a wipeout is sweet!

Since Pitbull did such a good job of listening to suggestions last year, I'll throw a couple of new ones into the ring — 1) before the start of each race, introduce the track. I never know what course I'm racing, 2) change the fonts (bigger is better), 3) at the pause menu, how about a "restart" option?, 4) and (to Accolade) for us more "mature" racers, get rid of the Gen X soundtrack and get something more appropriate to '60's muscle cars and '90's six digit supercars.

Well, Test Drive 5 may not be the greatest racing game of all-time, but is in the top five and is certainly the best in its class. A must-have for all racing enthusiasts.



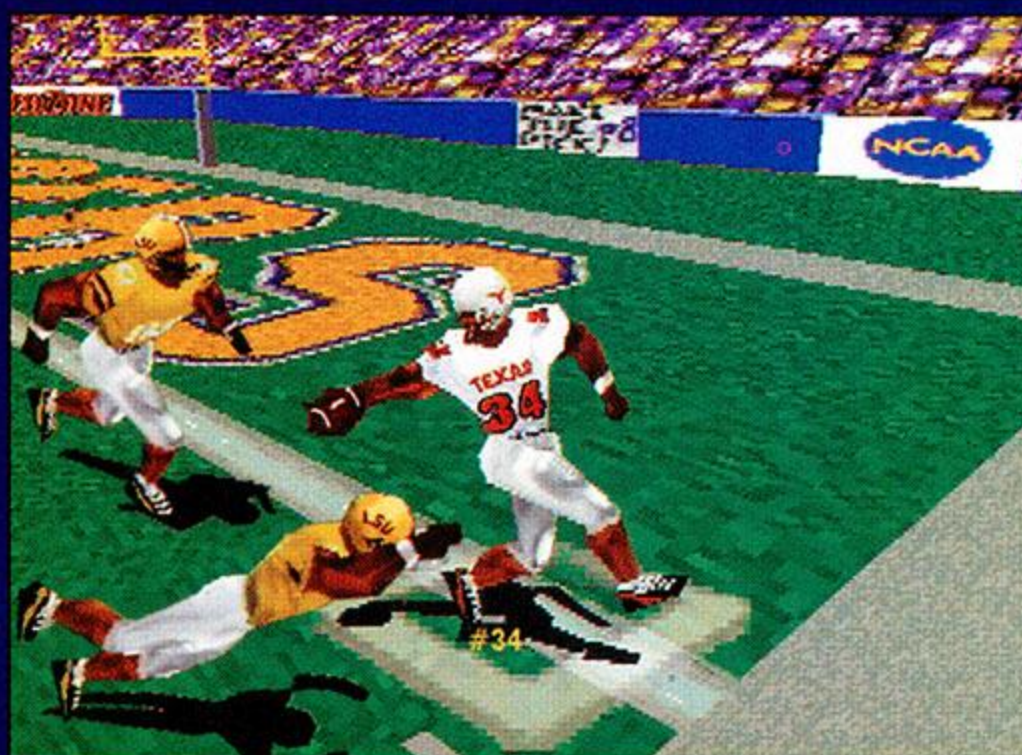


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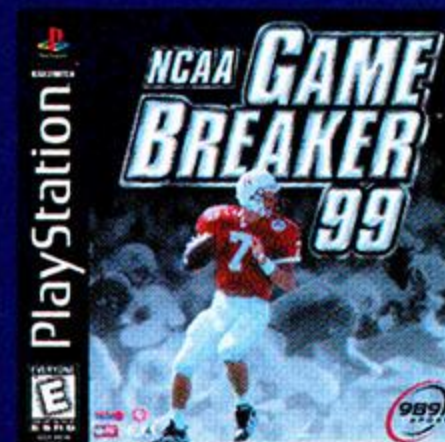
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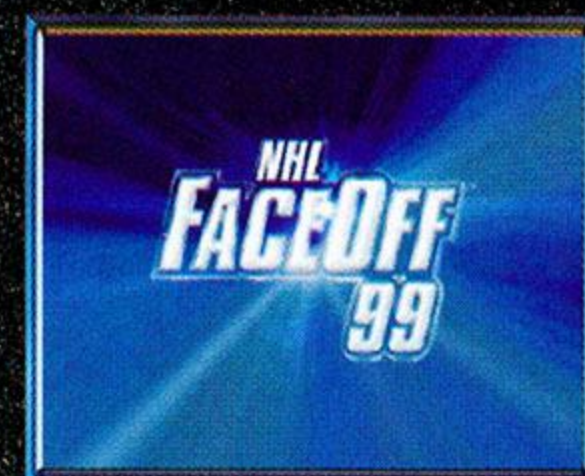
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NHL FACEOFF 99



Sports' NHL FaceOff 99 and EA Sports' NHL 99. If nothing else, I don't have to "assume" anything that's questionable will be fixed before the titles go to market!

Hockey fans have come to be as passionate about their video game purchases as they are about following their favorite NHL team. Although I reviewed both FaceOff 98 and NHL 98 over a year ago, I still receive mail saying "no, NHL is better", or "yeah, baby, FaceOff is the bomb". No doubt, then, that this year's reviews, whatever they may be, will also solicit many responses, both pro and con. However, in my mind, things aren't as easy to determine as they were last year.

NHL FaceOff 99 uses pretty much the same 3D, polygonal engine from last year. The frame rate is still very fast, and very smooth, to the point where I'll need to turn it down a few notches (the default is 50, I set it at 25). The biggest complaint with FaceOff 98 was that on the medium difficulty setting (the default), the game was WAY too hard — and that's because FaceOff 97 was way too EASY (yes,

they do listen to the consumers). Well, here it is, FaceOff 99, and Little Red Riding Hood would choose this year's version — the difficulty settings are just right! No longer is my man between the pipes getting whipped like horse, no sir, most games are 3-2, 4-1, or 2-2 (I've had lots of ties so far). In this respect, FaceOff 99 plays a lot like the new NHL.

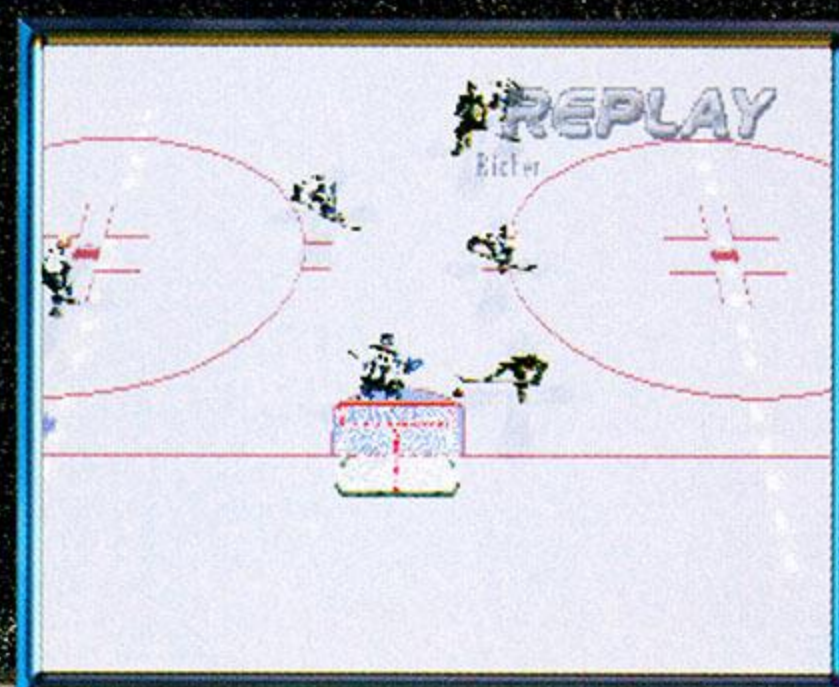
Graphically, the folks at Killer Games have taken a hockey title about as far as it can go. The players look amazing, there's a ton of detail to be found (from the team logos to the face

guards), and the ice has terrific reflectance. One of the areas that I appreciate in FaceOff is in the menu screens. Sure, they look similar to the last two products, with the same font and everything, but you know, I was able to get in and start playing a game instantly. There's nothing worse than needlessly screwing up a menu system that works, and wasting a bunch of time trying to figure out another one. NHL 99 is a good example of needlessly screwing something up. The animations in FO 99 are pretty amazing (and watching the goalies come out to grab the puck is a first), and are really highlighted by the new instant replay system.

New for FaceOff 99 is the play-by-play and color combination of Mike Emrick and Darren Pang. They do an incredible job, and keep up with the action better than any two man booth done in any other video game. One of the other well done new features is the TV style feature that occurs between face-offs. The camera will focus on a particular player, and then Emrick will give a brief anecdote about the player — very nice.

My one real complaint with FaceOff 99 is the same complaint I have with other hockey games, and that is that the majority of goals are scored by either cheap deflections (standing in front of the net and haphazardly whacking the 'shoot' button) or on one timers. There should be a system that allows you to line-up and aim your shot, much like you would in a soccer shoot-out, at least this would give you the feeling of a little more control.

As it stands, what with the easy to use interfaces, outstanding animations and graphics, and a well-tuned AI, NHL FaceOff 99 will retain its title as king of the Coolest Game on Earth for the PlayStation.





DEVELOPED BY EA SPORTS CANADA
PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS
WRITTEN BY ERIC

NHL 99

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least talented dudes — not cool by any stretch of the imagination. The other sore point for me was that NHL 98, unlike every other EA Sports game, had not implemented an "icon passing" type of system. As things would have it for '99, one of the two of these areas has been remedied, and the best part is, that

Boxed copy review #2 is now under way! For those of you that may have missed my review of NHL 98, my two major complaints were that there was way too much checking going on, to the point where the puck was being taken away from the biggest and bestest dudes by the smallest and

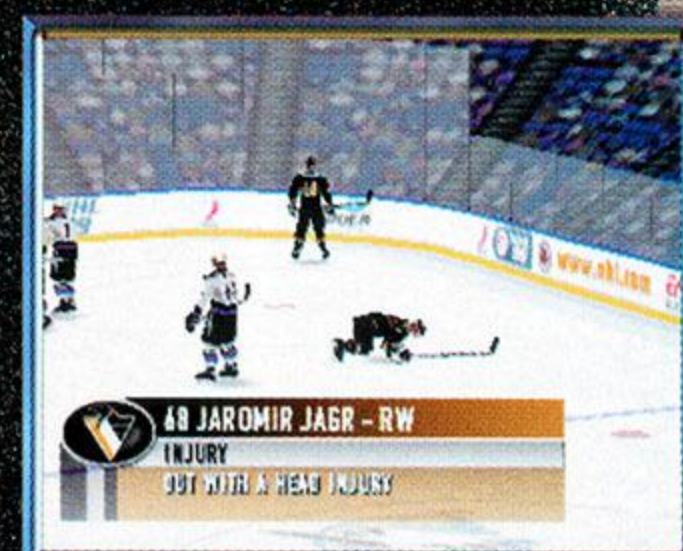
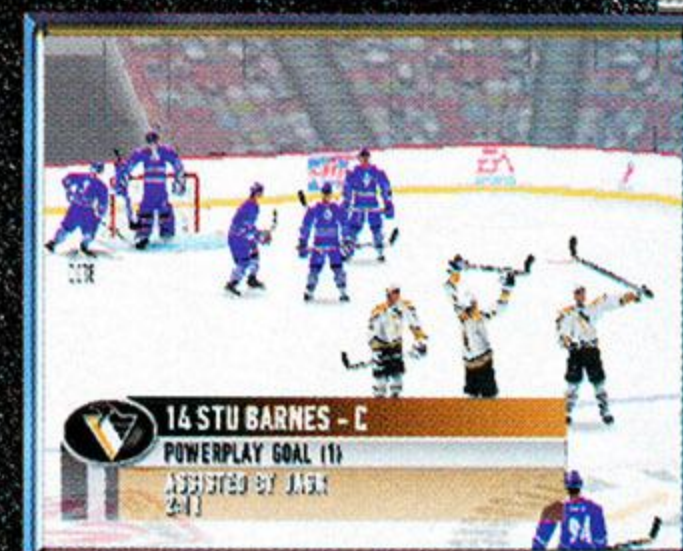


Those two factors aside, NHL 99 looks and plays much differently than does NHL FaceOff 99 from 989 Sports. Starting in the looks department (after all, that's what you notice first, right?), NHL 99 looks washed out and the color palette seems very dark, when compared with FaceOff. The ice in the 989 Sports product is shiny and glossy, with wonderful reflections and transparencies in the ice. The rinks in NHL, on the other hand, look dirty and lifeless (by comparison). If you were to just look at NHL without seeing FaceOff, you might not pay much attention to it, but when compared side-by-side, there's a BIG difference. OK, enough with the graphics, already! Let's talk gameplay!

Both games use the buttons in a similar fashion; the square button shoots, the circle button turbos and checks, and the 'X' button passes. The triangle button does a drop pass in FaceOff, and a special move in NHL, neither of which is particularly beneficial since the

drop pass is usually broken up by a defender or missed by the offensive player, and the special move usually gets wiped out by a check or a cluster of players. The one-timer shot works the same with both games; a quick tap of the 'X' button followed by a tap of the square icon. As I mentioned in the FaceOff review, scoring mainly comes from one-timers and deflections, and the same can be said for NHL 99, although you are more likely to score with a big slap shot in NHL than you are in FaceOff. In fact, NHL 99 utilizes a power meter to let you see the strength of your shot. Unfortunately, half of the time you'll end up getting the puck stolen as you focus in on the meter, rather than the defenders skating around you. Both games offer all of the other options and features that you've come to expect in a hockey game. The clock, however, is a big part of the game, certainly where penalties are concerned. The clock moves quickly in FaceOff, so I found playing 10 minute periods to be a comfortable amount of time for playing a game. For NHL, I had to play 5 minute periods as the clock moves slower. Now, this normally isn't any kind of issue, except that when you take a major penalty (5 minutes), you're out for the entire length of the period (as opposed to FaceOff, where you'll sit out half of the 10 minute period). What really separates NHL 99 from NHL FaceOff 99, however, is the frame rate. As I stated earlier, I had to turn down the speed of FaceOff, because it just flies! Unfortunately, you can't turn UP the speed in NHL. The game plods along, and often feel like there are frames of animation missing. It's difficult to describe, but imagine going from point A to point D, but skipping points B & C on the way!

Well, I'm out of time, but suffice it to say that NHL 99 is a decent game, but not a great one, and certainly can't keep pace with NHL FaceOff 99.



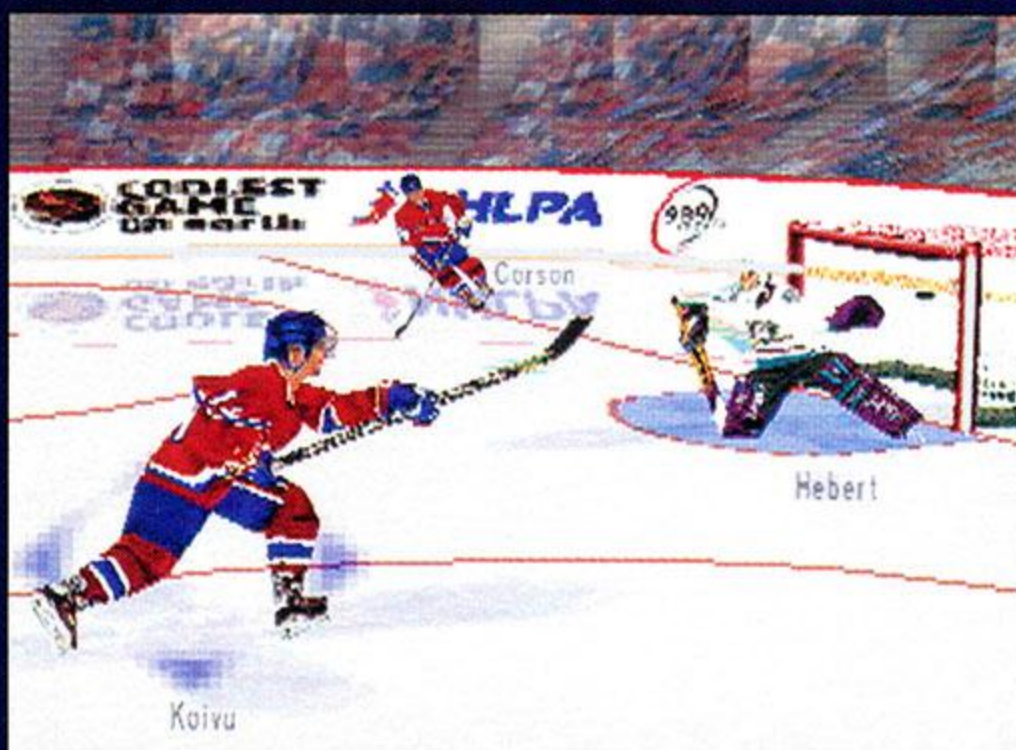
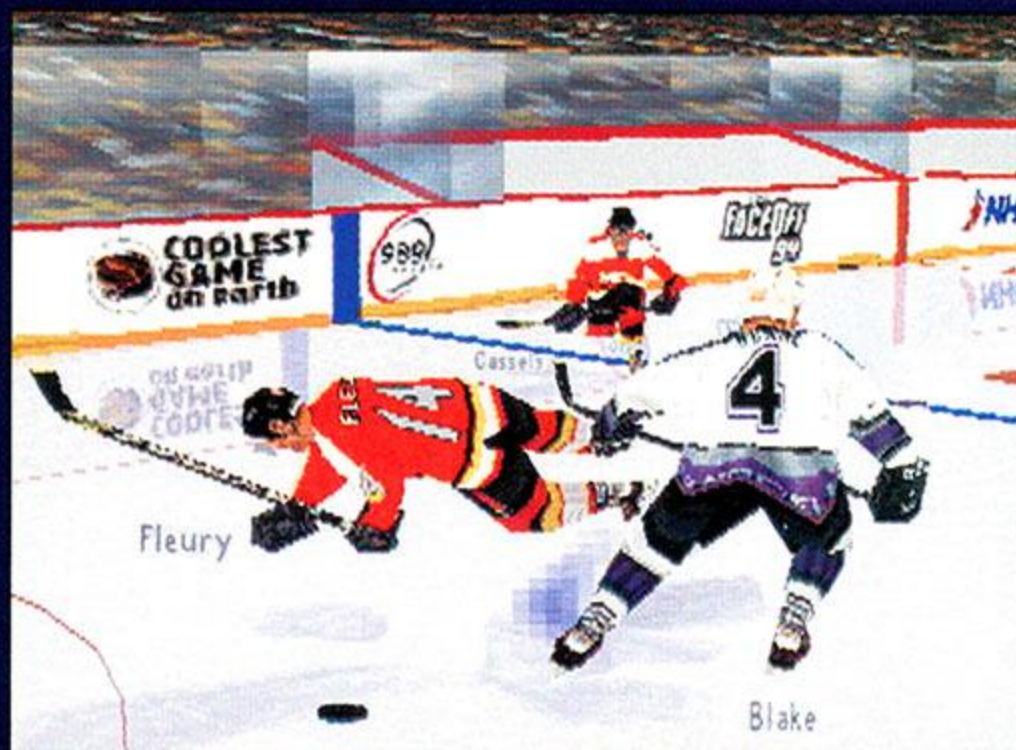


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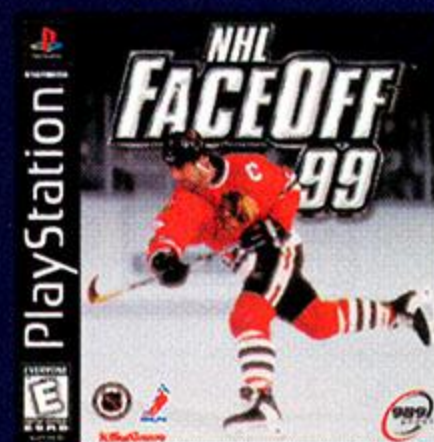
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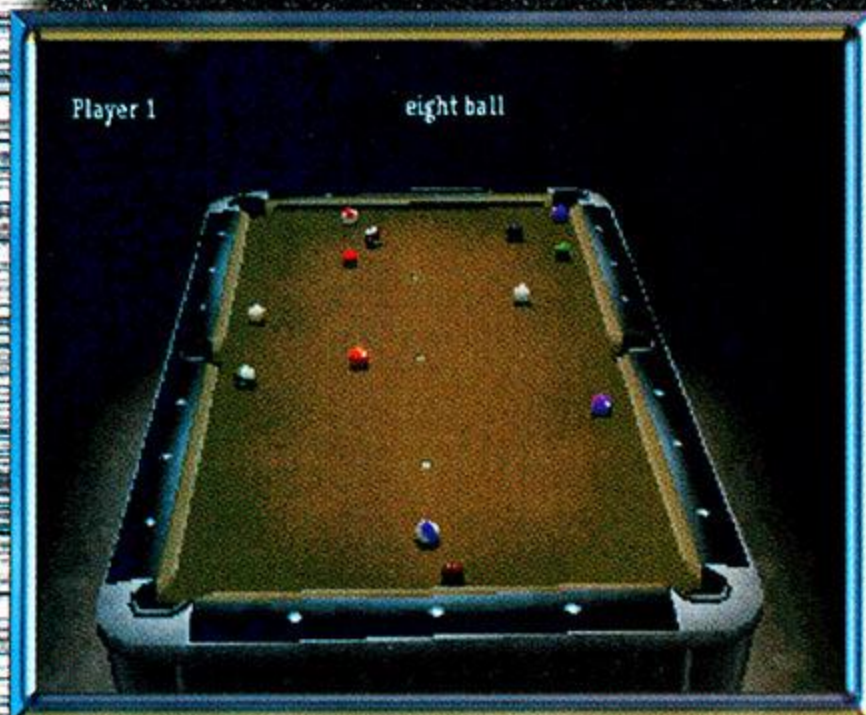
**NHL
FACEOFF
99**



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BACKSTREET BILLIARDS



Videogame billiards have sure come a long way since Trick Shot for the Atari 2600. The power of the PlayStation allows programmers to create a realistic physics model so that the balls react the way you expect them to. Since the essence of pool is always the same — determining the best angle to knock the balls into the pockets — the only thing to differentiate competing games are the frills. In my humble opinion, Backstreet Billiards edges out its competition.

Like Pool Hustler, this game features 9 ball, 8 ball, rotation, 14-1, and bowliards. However, since the multi-tap is supported, you can also play cutthroat and 5-9. But wait! There's more! Three ball, four ball, one cushion, three cushion, one pocket and free modes are also available on the carom table. Backstreet Billiards has a practice and trick shot mode, but it also features a speed mode and technical mode to hone your skills. In speed mode, you must pocket a series of balls in the shortest amount of time possible. In technical mode, you must pocket the balls without making a mistake. The difficulty settings, rules, and camera angles can be adjusted to your liking and there is an instant replay. A power meter allows you to determine the strength of your shot and, in games that require it, a "next ball" icon appears continuously. If you still can't tell which ball is which, you can hold a button to reveal the numbers. You can also adjust the strike point on the cue

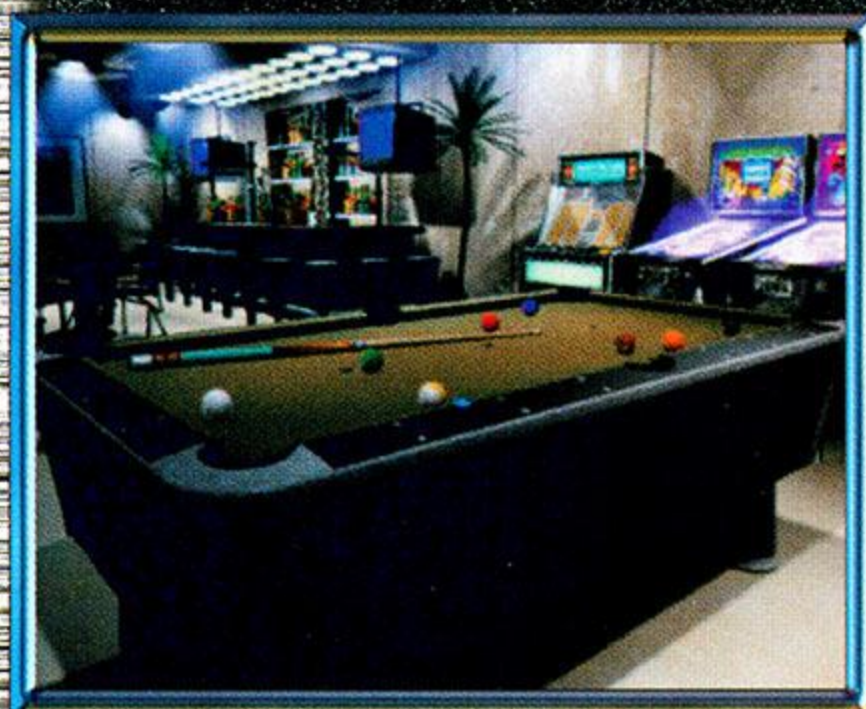
talk with and defeat various characters. When you do, the "points" earned can be used to increase your power, technique and mentality which in turn affect your ability to play the game. You might also be given different cues to play with or find items which can be equipped to change your status. Games are played in establishments with names such as Sparky's, Little Cherry, Cochabamba, and the Golden Dragon Restaurant — each with tables of a different color. The background graphics of the venues are quite detailed, and you are even given a quick 3D tour upon entering. The game's music also changes in each environment — jazz, rock and roll, Spanish guitar, oriental, etc.



Now for the criticism. The story mode, featuring anime-type characters, has some questionable translation. I'm pretty sure I saw a sign reading "Hyper Shop Banana." Talking to characters continuously as in an RPG gets somewhat tedious. There is no opportunity to bet money on your games, although thankfully only one victory is needed to progress through the storyline. The game instructions provide 16 pages of rules, but an on-screen training mode would have been helpful. The trick shot mode is also quite abbreviated when compared with Pool Hustler. Finally, the use of the left and right direction buttons to move the cue is the opposite of what you would expect.

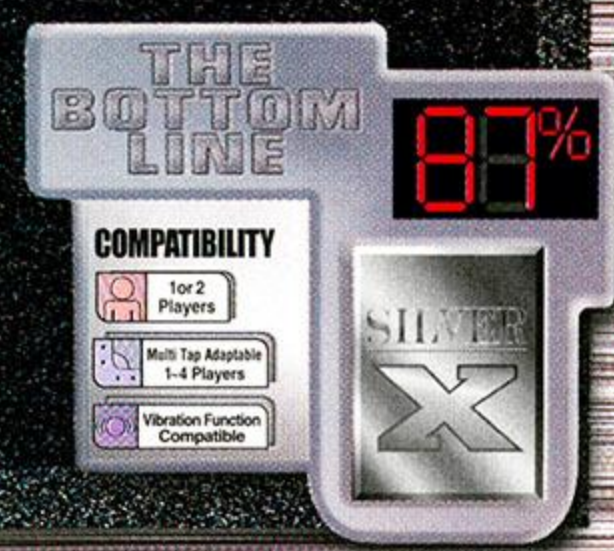
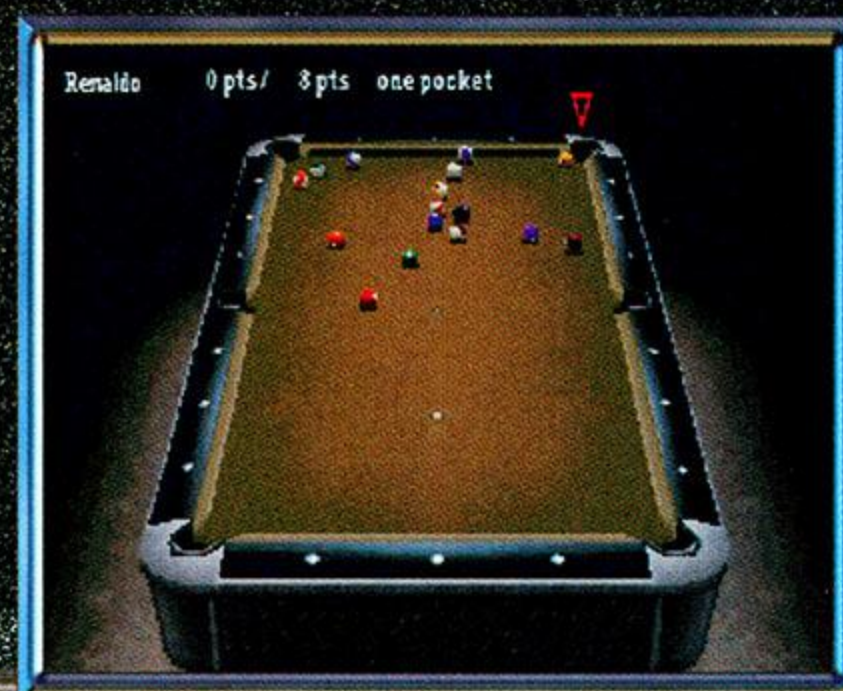


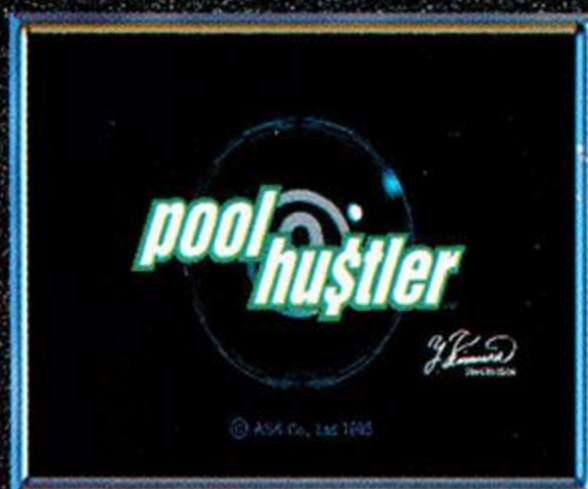
After playing these pool games side by side (see my Pool Hustler review), I have concluded that Backstreet Billiards is the better game. Despite the lack of wagering, the story mode is more interesting, the meter is an important addition, and the graphics and music are better. Add a four-player mode and a wider variety of games, and you've got a game that's worth the color of your money.



ball and the angle of the cue stick to add English. The disembodied cue sticks still float eerily above the table, however, like something from Disneyland's Haunted Mansion.

What would a pool game be without a story mode? Apparently, your father used to be a legendary hustler — your name, after all, is "legendary-hustler junior." No, I'm not kidding. Anyway, your Dad gave you a special cue for your 10th birthday, shortly before he disappeared. The cue was later stolen, and now you are looking for it. In order to get clues to its whereabouts, you have to



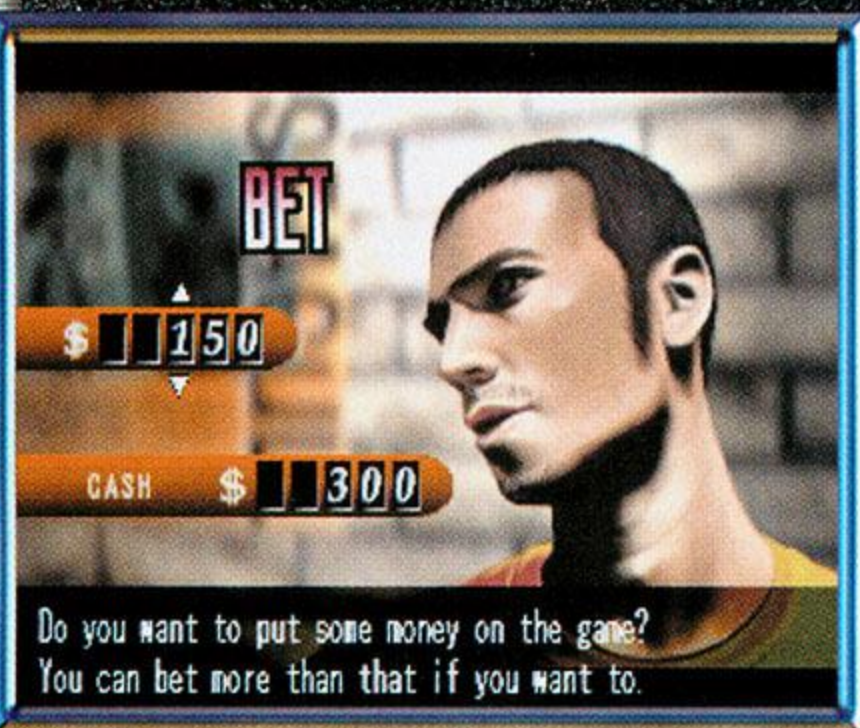


DEVELOPED BY ASK
PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION
WRITTEN BY MARK

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SPORTS

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POOL HUSTLER



Do you want to put some money on the game?
You can bet more than that if you want to.

more than a year, two brand new pool games have appeared at the same time to compete for your hard-earned cash (and one more is on the way).

First up for review purposes is Activision's Pool Hustler. It features 9-ball, 8-ball, rotation, 14-1 continuous, and bowliards game variations. There is a lengthy trick shot mode, a practice mode where you can load and save layouts, and a lesson mode that teaches you techniques such as masse, English, and jump shots. The difficulty settings, rule settings (amateur vs. pro) and camera

angles can be adjusted, and you can use an instant replay to watch your best shots over and over. There is even an option to show the cue ball's trajectory. Pool Hustler is also compatible with analog controllers — the left stick controls the camera and the right stick pulls back the cue like a pinball plunger — but vibration is not recognized.

The main feature of the game is the story mode, which allows you to play against 12 CPU opponents in 6 various locales throughout "Central City." (I never saw The Flash, although I suspect he was there at super-speed pushing the CPU's object balls and my cue ball in the pockets). In order to progress through the storyline, you've got to accumulate enough cash to enter the next competition. Your opponent's heads will "talk trash" via

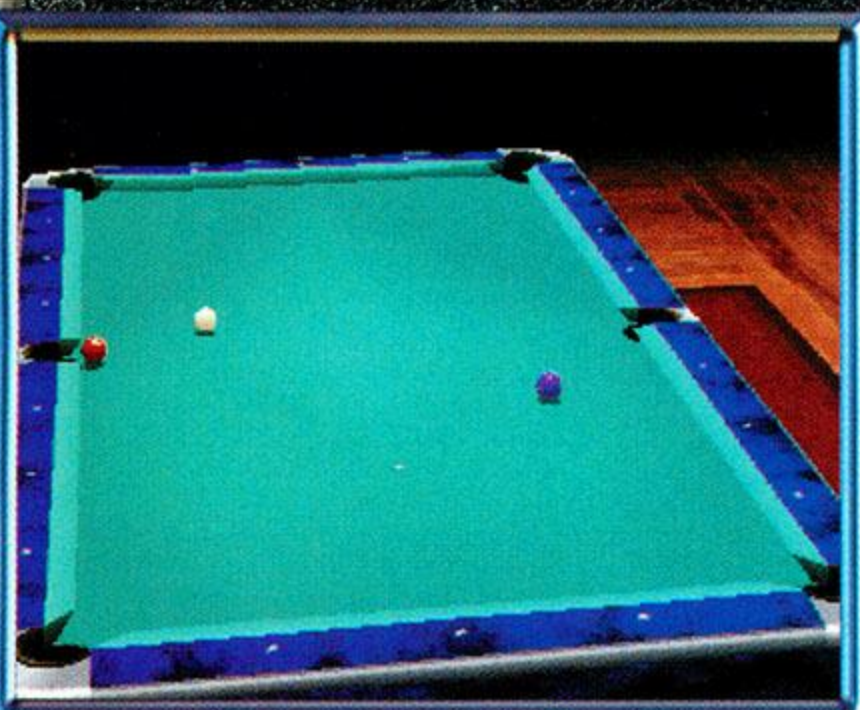
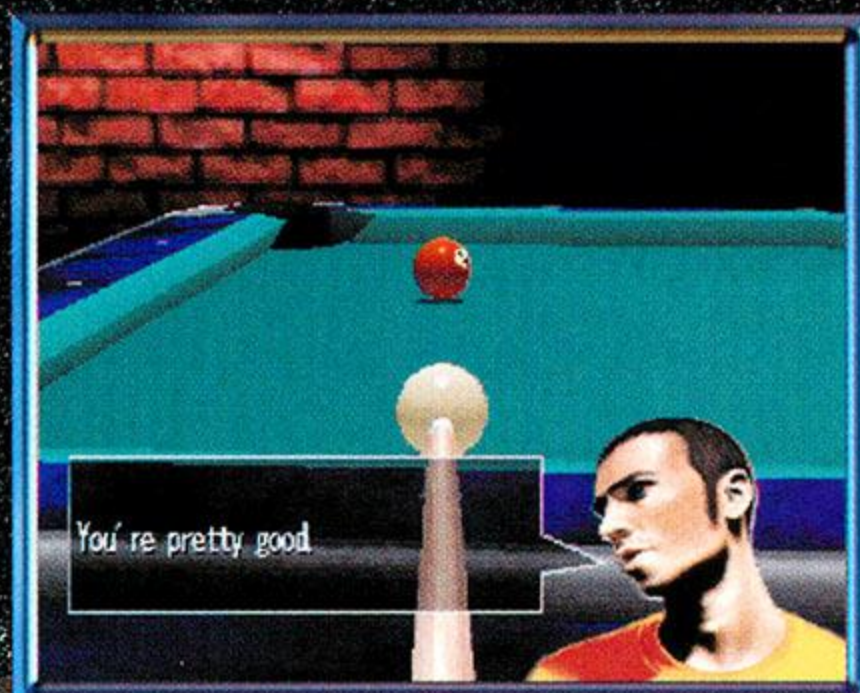
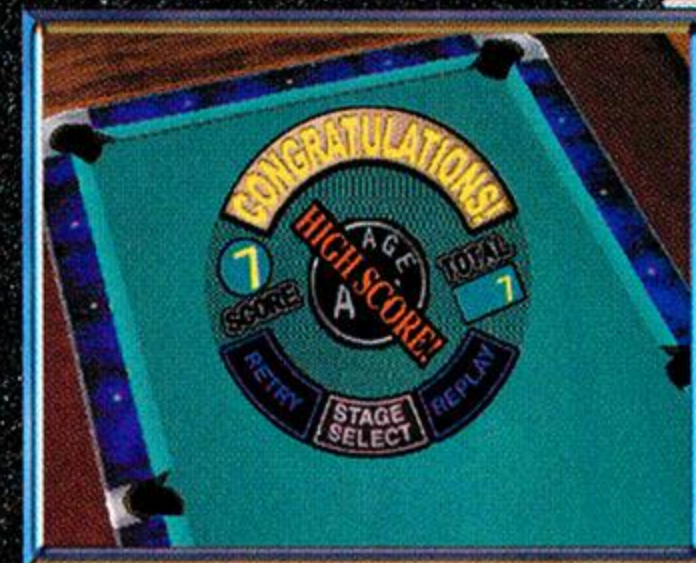
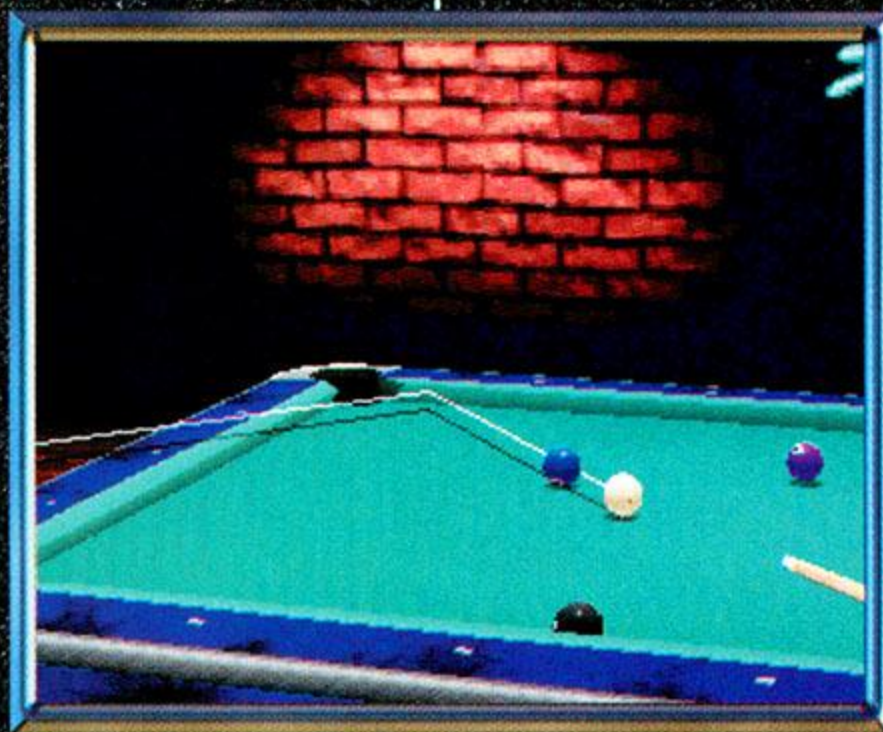
text boxes and try to tempt you to make side bets on individual shots throughout the game — hence the "hustler" in the game's title. Paul Newman or Tom Cruise would be at home here. Two out of three games wins a match and earns you some greenbacks. When you have accu-

mulated enough cash, you will be able to enter new competitions at other venues. If you lose a match, and your cash drops below the minimum level needed to compete, the game is over.

Now some criticism. The menu for in-game options is not very user-friendly. The camera zooms in and out strangely after shots are made — sometimes missing the balls being sunk. Graphically, the tables and balls are fine but the backgrounds are nondescript. The music is only so-so. There is no power meter to help you with your shots. When playing games such as 9 ball and 14-1 continuous, the graphic showing you the color of the ball you must hit flashes very quickly. Unless you've memorized the numbers by the colors, you'll have to try to zoom in on the balls to figure out which is next. Although the wagering adds depth to the game, many of the bets offered by your CPU opponent are ridiculously hard. The story mode also takes a long time to get through, since you've got to win at least two games every time and, if you lose your money, you have to start over from the beginning. Finally, although the game stores records for up to six different players, only two can play at one time.

Do these sound like nit-picks? Undoubtedly so. That's the problem with modern technology. Since it is possible to program a completely accurate pool simulation, the only thing to distinguish one pool game from another will be the "whistles and bells" and not the underlying program itself. Pool Hustler is a fine game which can be enjoyed by both enthusiasts and casual players alike, and the wagering adds depth to the contest. However, in the final analysis,

the lack of three and four player games and the less impressive music and graphics makes me give the edge to Backstreet Billiards.



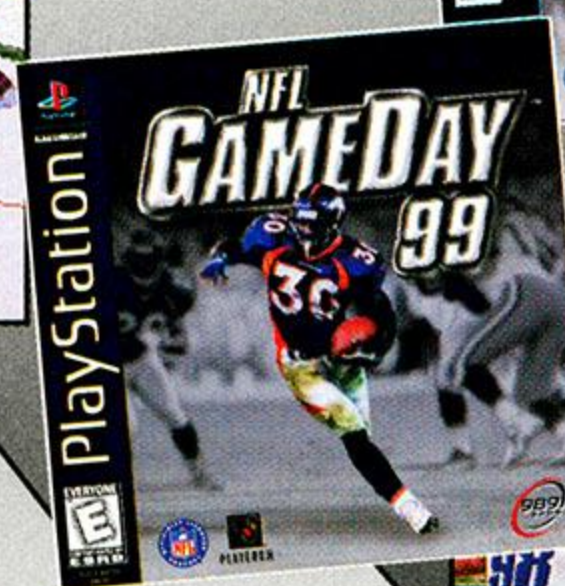
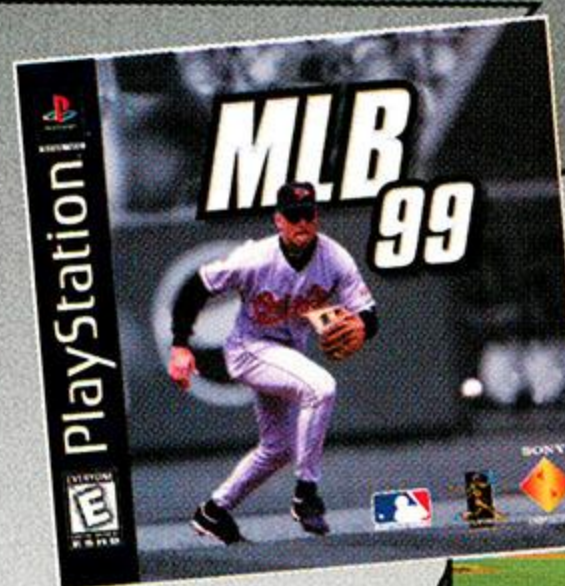
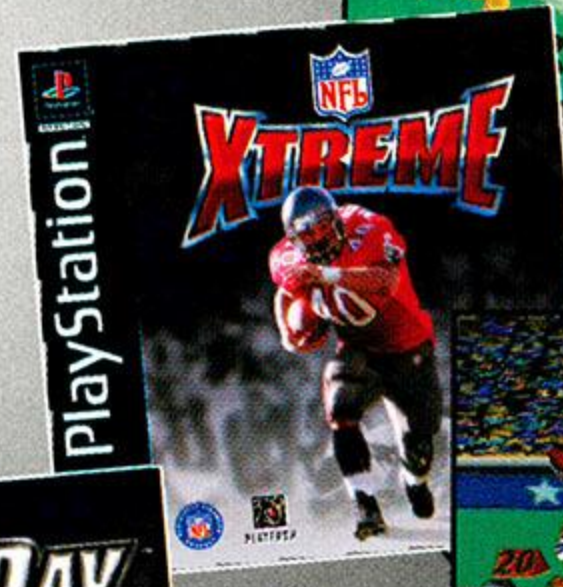
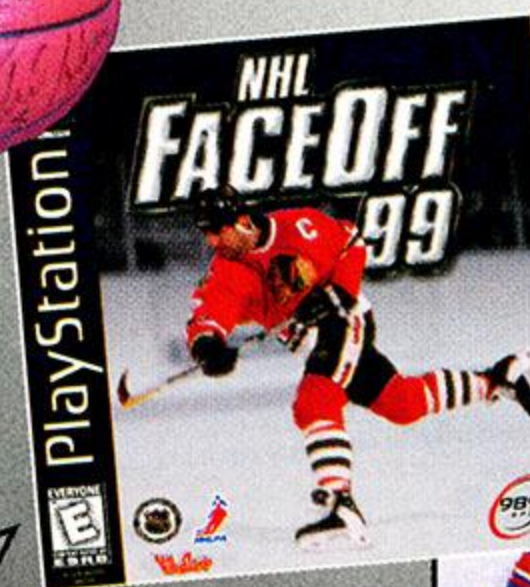
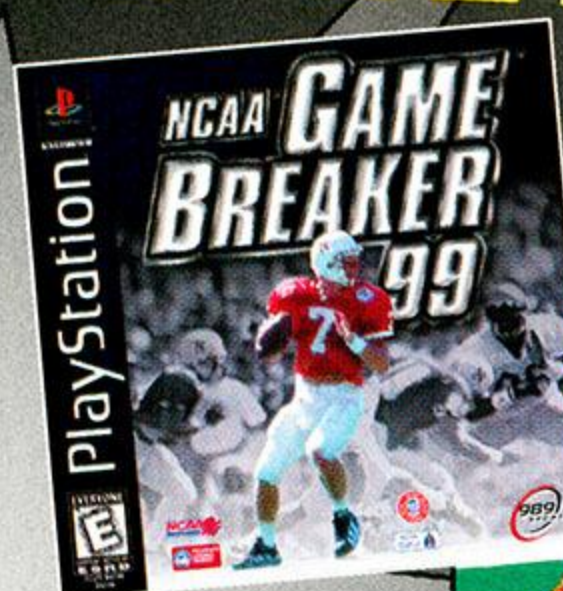
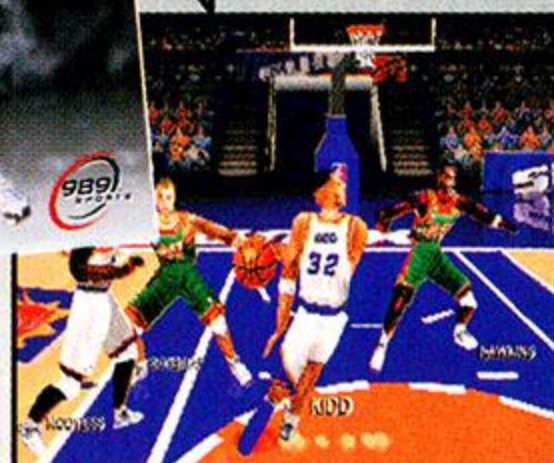
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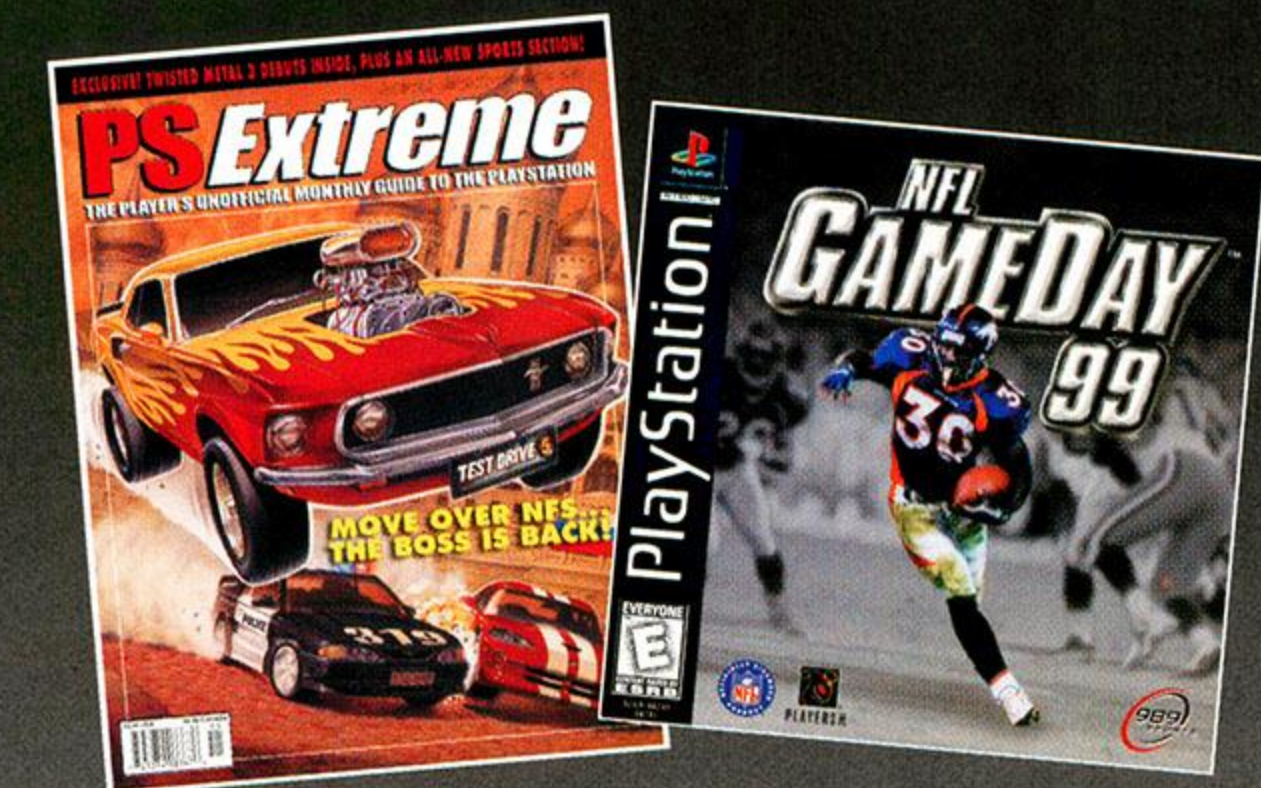


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TEST DRIVE: OFF ROAD 2



Like any off-road racing game, Accolade's Test Drive Off Road 2 requires that the player suspend disbelief while playing. The trucks, jeeps, Hummers, etc. take a tremendous amount of abuse — flying over cliffs and the like, running up a sidewalk will slow you down almost as much as hitting a tree or slamming off of a fence, and you will find yourself on tracks that have you driving through a castle in Wales.

And these statements of fact are all part of why I love this game. In the pages of this issue, you will see Eric's glowing review of Test Drive 5, a review that I agree with in every respect — the game is awesome! Test Drive Off Road 2 is not as great as 5, but it is a super game... let's take a look.

While the game suffers, like TD5, from a lack of niceties (there are even fewer than the limited goodies in TD5), the track design and slow intensity build-up of the World Tour play mode make up for the lack of detail in the glue screens and out-of-game presentation. TDOR2 is built upon the Test Drive 4 engine and features incredible terrain, jumps that will have your Dual Shock going into convulsions, beautiful scenery and 20 licensed vehicles that range from Jeep Wranglers and Ford Explorers, to military class vehicles and Hummers. And you race these vehicles over six different tracks, each five to six minutes in length (no multiple lap races — everything is checkpoint based),

with a number of course obstacles to get in your way and mud, pools of water, sand, etc. to slow you down. The courses are all unique (Santa Cruz, Hawaii, Morocco, Switzerland, Wales and the Mojave desert), are very long and offer a lot to see and fly over, and can be raced on backwards, after unlocking them in World Tour Mode.

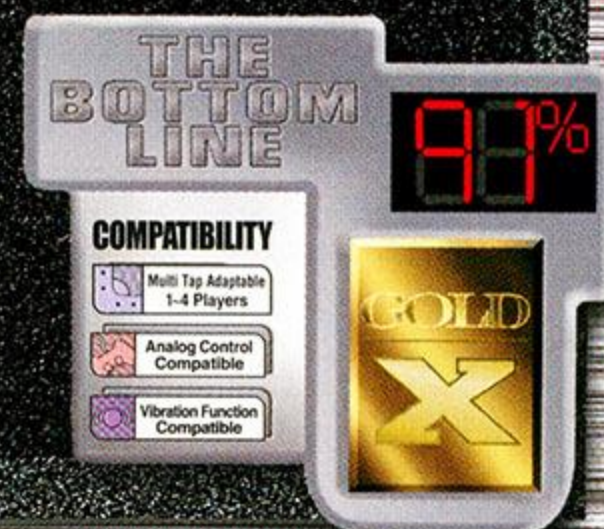
World Tour Mode is the way to play the game. While you can also race in Single Game mode, there really isn't much of a point. The World Tour is what allows you to buy and sell vehicles (in the beginning, you only have enough money to buy a Wrangler or a truck) and unlock

new courses. You begin by picking a class of vehicle (Safari, Truck, Military, SUV, Hummer or Open Class(es)), buying any vehicle that you can afford in that class, then hitting the road.

The gameplay starts slow and gets more difficult as you make your way through the races in your first chosen class. The first four present little challenge and it is easy to finish in first. After that, the other five racers are on your tail and won't shake loose. While not as fast or adrenalin-inducing as TD5, the wide tracks, alternate paths and short-cuts keep the racing action competitive. You don't use the brake a lot — unless you totally misread an opening in a fence, etc. and you want to always try and stay on the smoothest "road" surface available, even if it means driving across the side of a hill!

The one weak area in TDOR2 is the lack of communication to the player. When you start a new World Tour, the game gives you no opportunity to enter your name — you must do this prior to entering and make the choice from the game's option menu. Once in the tour, the game's load screen shows you the location of your first race. After you finish the first race, like TD5, it doesn't tell you where you're racing next! Is it the Mojave or Morocco? Only your knowledge of Greek and Roman edifices will give you the answer. In addition, the game is missing that EA/Need for Speed glossiness... you know, the car showroom with the voice-overs describing all of the cool licensed vehicles (kind of an FMV Hot Wheel (TM)), while the car rotates on screen... that kind of stuff.

While missing the finishing touches, Test Drive Off Road 2 is a rocking, rumbling and rolling good time. It is easily the best off-road game available on the PlayStation and features enough courses and licensed vehicles to keep the mud flying through most of the winter.



NCAA GAMEBREAKER 99

989 Sports / Red Zone Interactive / November

PREVIEWS **PS Extreme** **SPORTS**

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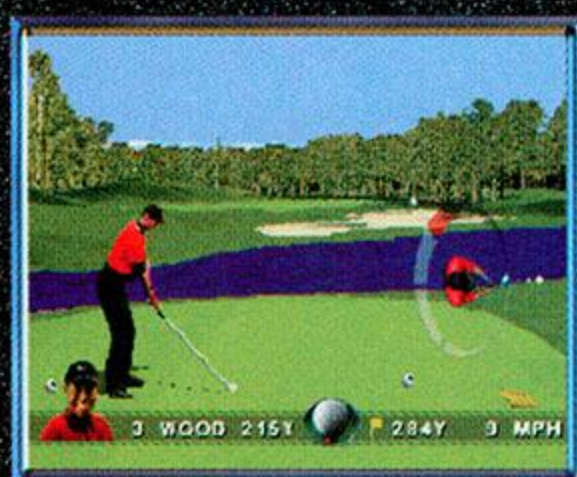


989 Sports and Red Zone Interactive are bringing out their third football game for '99 a tad later than expected (NFL Extreme and NFL GameDay 99 are already available), but it looks as if it will be well worth the wait. After all, there are 113 college stadiums to get right, and boy are things looking good! You've got to see the amount of detail in each of the stadiums — it's unreal. Speaking of boy-howdy, 989 got the goods on ABC's Keith Jackson, THE voice of college football. He'll be calling all of the play-by-play this year. Also new for '99 are the following: a "pummel" button, allowing for some serious hits, 2,200 new plays, mud and grass stains that show on the uniforms, twice as many "GameBreakers" as last year, polygonal players that are actually scaled to the proper height and weight, and the Blue Chip Recruiting system that allows you to try and build a national powerhouse. Throw in eight player capability and a little dual shock action, and you've got a contender. Check out our complete review next month!

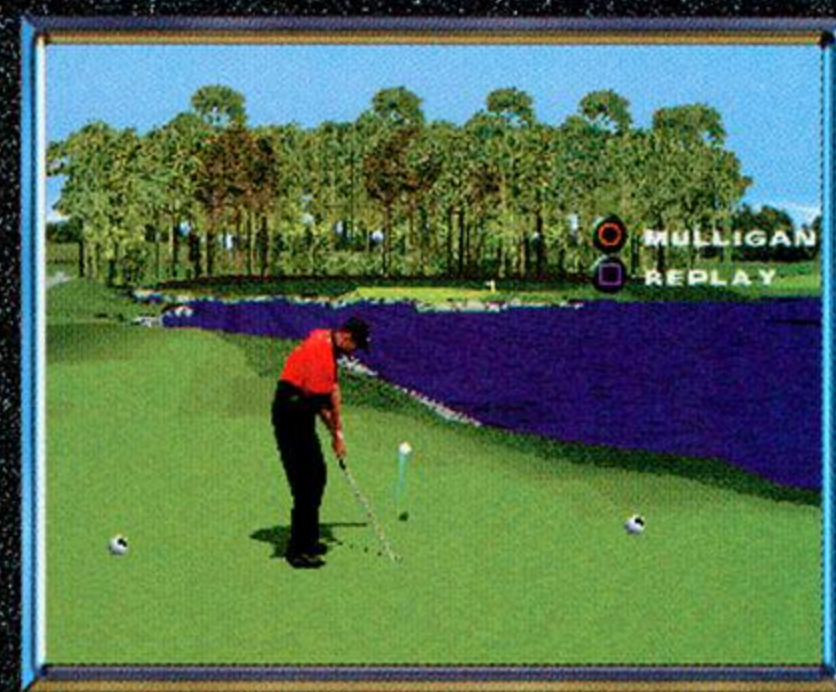
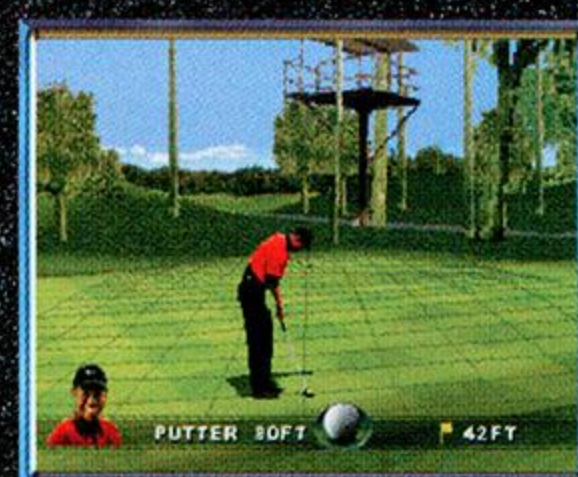


TIGER WOODS 99 PGA TOUR GOLF

EA Sports / EA Sports / November



Electronic Arts landed the big fish of celebrity licenses when they got Tiger Woods earlier this year. The deal was worth about as much as it cost the government to put Steve Austin back together but, in this day and age, Tiger is as close as it comes to being bionic. For those of you that can't get enough "Tiger" in your vocabulary, try adding these catchy phrases: Tiger Vision (a new video game system, no, no, scratch that, it's the ability to go for aggressive shots), Tiger Zone (a kids paradise, no, no, scratch that, you'll hit the ball farther in this area), and Tiger Tips (a classic shoe design, no, no scratch that, it's actually advice from the young prophet — hit it straight). More importantly, the courses that come with Tiger are of the TPC variety; Summerlin, Las Colinas, Southwind, Sawgrass, and Scottsdale. If you wish to play as someone other than Tiger, there are an additional 7 pros (O'Meara, Janzen, Love III, and others). There are 9 game play modes, including the made for TV Skins Match. Tune in next month when we unveil which of one of our 300 yard drivin' big boys gets to teach the Tiger a lesson!



FORMULA 1 '98

Psygnosis / Visual Sciences Ltd. / November



Formula 1 '98 represents the third installment of the popular series from Psygnosis. The Formula 1 format has worked well for Psygnosis but, this time around, an all new game engine was put into use by developer Visual Sciences, from Scotland. The new 3D engine allows for new camera angles, like a cockpit view with working rearview mirrors, new 3D pitstops that are fully animated (with the crew working feverishly to get you back out on the track), and a multitude of new camera angles (including the TV-style 'crane' vantage point). The computer AI has also been freshly implemented, utilizing a "harder the farther you go" system, making the game progressively more difficult. The new car models reflect the current changes in the FIA, so the cars will be narrower and the tires will now have grooves. All of the FIA tracks are in Formula 1 '99, including Monte Carlo, Hockenheim, and Suzuka. Of course, what good would a car be without a driver, right? Right. So, F1 '99 comes packed with all of the stud drivers and F1 teams (Ferrari, McLaren, Williams, Jordan, and Schumacher, Alesi, Irvine, and more). Check out Alex's review in the next issue!



METAL GEAR SOLID

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY KONAMI

GENRE:
ACTION/ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW

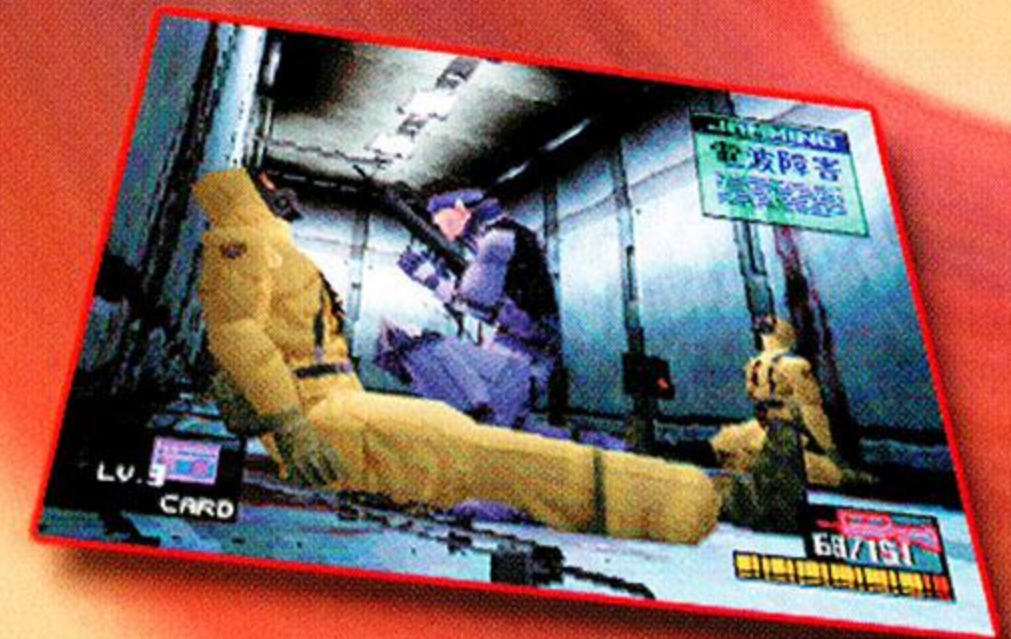


It's been a long, arduous wait, but it's finally over. By the time you read this review, you've most likely picked up and played one of '98's most anticipated games. If you haven't, this article should convince you to make a beeline to your nearest software retailer and grab yourself a copy.

While not for everyone (as witnessed here at the Dimension Publishing offices), Metal Gear Solid is a testament to the evolution of the future of video games. Blending fresh and unique gameplay mechanics with a great cinematic storyline, this is as close as you're going to get to "interactive entertainment."

Besides Capcom's Resident Evil series and SquareSoft's Final Fantasy VII, Metal Gear Solid is really the first game to blur the lines between video games and movies. The game has at least an hour's worth of high-quality, well-acted, in-game cinematics that suck you into the dangerous world of Solid Snake as he attempts to infiltrate a nuclear base somewhere in Alaska (which has been taken over by his old Special Ops team, Foxhound). These cinematics are laced throughout Metal Gear Solid, breaking up the action-oriented game sequences every 10 to 15 minutes. For some, it might be too much story and not enough gameplay (it's said, that by skipping the cinematics, the game can be beaten in roughly four hour's time) but, for me, it works. Sure, there are some who don't have the patience — or just don't care — to sit back and watch the plot unfold through non-interactive video every few minutes, but I believe most will find themselves completely enthralled and entertained in the plot twists and turns, the character interaction, and the progressive story that unravels as you delve deeper and deeper into the game. And, the cut-scenes aren't completely non-interactive either. Konami has done some unique and cool things with the Dual Shock feature that enhance these cinematics. One, in particular, deals with your showdown with Psycho Mantis, one of the game's many bosses. I won't spoil it for you, but it's pretty darn cool.

As for gameplay, there is plenty of it. Again, the developers at Konami have gone way beyond the call of duty and have come up with a mixture of either completely new play mechanics, or have taken existing ones from other games and incorporated them in a totally different fashion. One of these, for example, is a scene where you've been captured and



Also, I got you this level 6 card.
It'll get you out of that Torture Room.





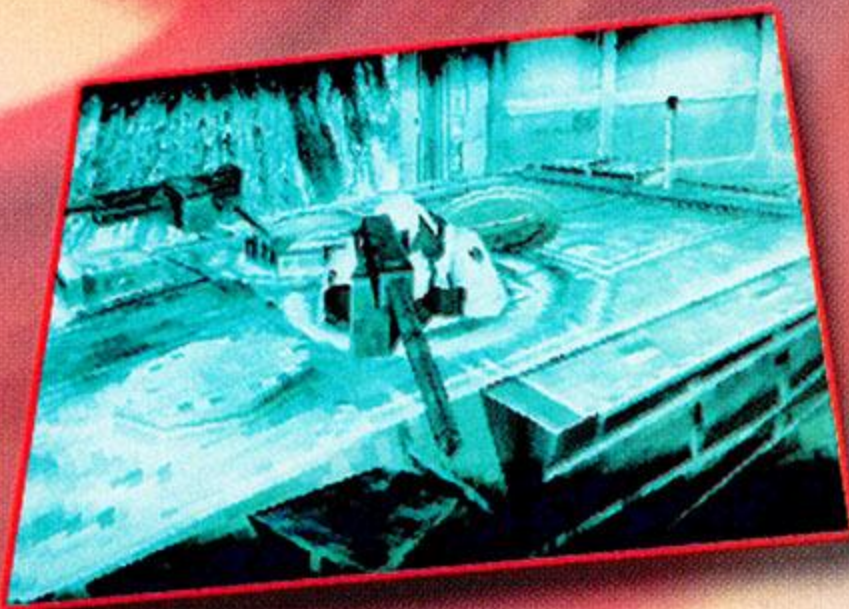
are being tortured by Revolver Ocelot, a member of FoxHound and a boss that you didn't completely kill earlier-on in the game. During this sequence, in order to survive the torturous bolts of electricity that are being shot through your body, you have to do the old Track & Field "button mashing" technique that Konami themselves made so famous years back. Of course, if you've been reading PSExtreme regularly for the past six or so months, then you know all about the stealth mechanics of the game; where you have to keep Snake out of the enemies' field of vision in order not to be seen. Over and above that, there is plenty of shooting mixed in with the sticking to walls and hiding in the shadows. As you make your way through Shadow Moses Island (the home of the nuclear base), you will find a collection of deadly weaponry, from a standard pistol and stun grenades to a sniper rifle, an automatic machine gun and a missile launcher. Some other great moments in MGS come from repelling down the side of a building while a Hind helicopter is shooting at you, to trying to keep your hands steady while using your sniper rifle to take out Sniper Wolf (yet another member of FoxHound), as she darts from tree to tree in an effort to kill you first. Actually, there are a ton of these memorable moments in Metal Gear and, if you're like me, you'll be shaking your head in amazement quite a bit.

Graphically, the game is a masterpiece. Again, some have complained that there are too many muted color tones — dark grays, greens, blues, etc. While that may be true, I feel it's done on purpose in order to portray the stark and bleak atmosphere of Alaska, as well as convey the hopelessness of the mission you've been forced to accept. For the most part, the camera is situated over and a little bit behind Snake, but there are many instances when it will change automatically to suit the gameplay.

It's obvious that Mr. Kojima (the game's creator) and his talented team left no stone unturned, and this is especially evident in the control area. Controlling Snake is easy and second-nature, even though most of the buttons are used. The only hiccup comes when trying to stay stationary with your back against a wall. Because of the awkward angles you're sometimes presented with, pressing against a wall will sometimes make him move unexpectedly to the right or left, which can ultimately get you into trouble.

There's quite a lot more to talk about, from the inspiring musical soundtrack and the extra modes and goodies, to the topical and controversial issues dealt with in the storyline. Unfortunately, I've come up against my allotted word count. Metal Gear Solid has been ballyhooed as THE game of 1998 and there's a good reason why. The game screams quality from start to finish and there is so much cool stuff here that you would be foolish not to have this game in your library.

MGS definitely ranks up their with the PlayStation elite and is just another reason why you should own this amazing game console.



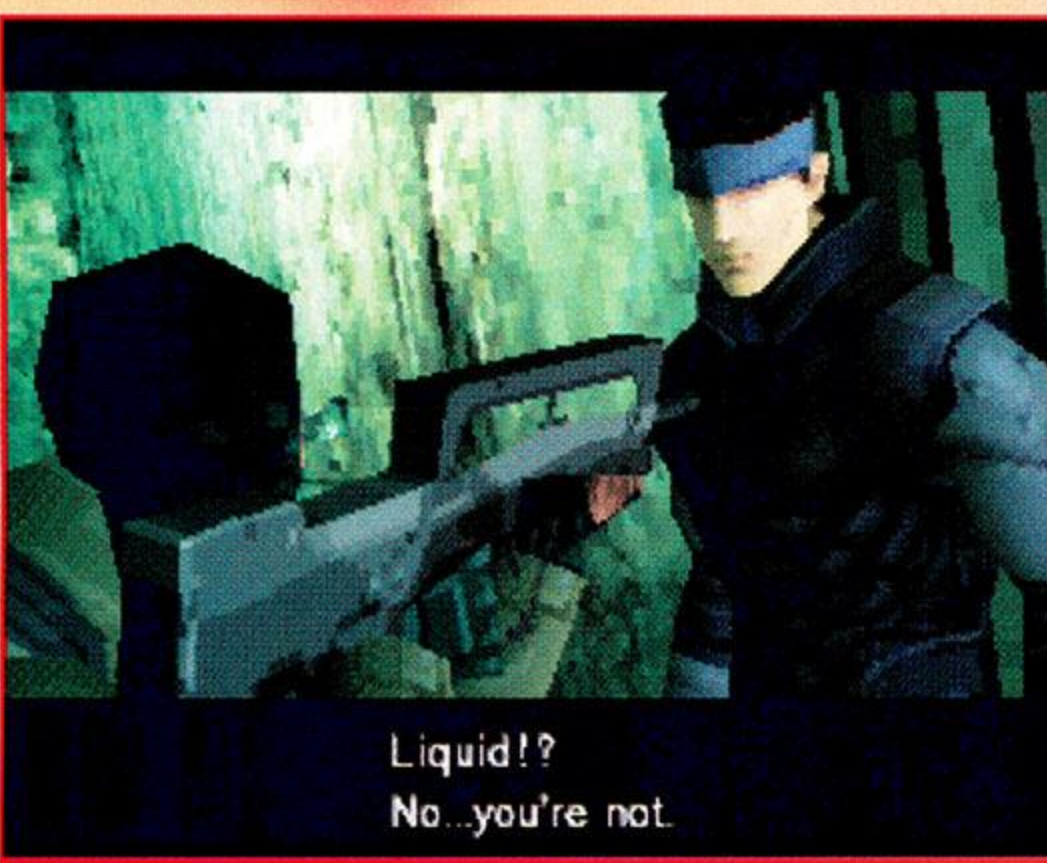
GREG

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME 98%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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STREAK

PUBLISHED BY GT INTERACTIVE — DEVELOPED BY SINGLETRAC

GENRE:
RACING
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



When Singletrac ended its association with Sony more than a year ago, it had to leave behind the names Twisted Metal and Jet Moto for legal reasons. If you thought that meant that Singletrac had given up on the genres that made them famous, think again! Car combat lives on through its recent release Rogue Trip, reviewed last issue, and now futuristic stunt racing continues with Streak.

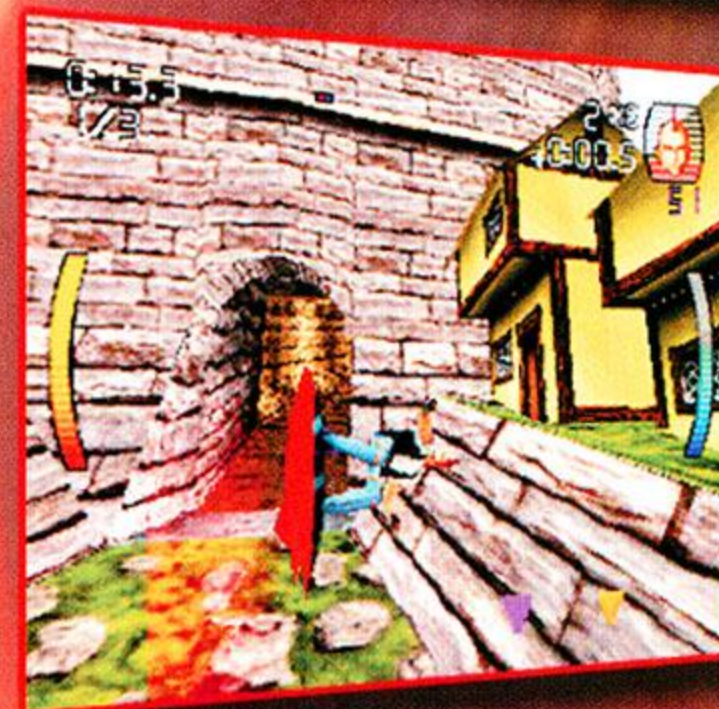
In Streak, players compete on secret technology known as GEMBlades. These are hoverboards which leave a colored neon wake behind them (the "streak"). GEMBlades can travel over water and anything else in their path. A group of Gen-X'ers with various histories and motives has been invited to participate in the secret sport of streaking. There is something sinister behind the competition, of course, and it is up to you to figure out what is going on.

Singletrac has earned a reputation for fast-paced games, with even faster-paced music, as well as inventive characters, interesting storylines and unique course/level designs. At the same time, their games have been somewhat weak in the graphics department. Streak doesn't deviate much from the standard Singletrac formula in any of these areas. The graphics look somewhat better than prior efforts, but perhaps this is due to the fact that many races take place in darker environments.

Speaking of tricks, it is important that you attempt your share. Why? Well, in Streak, your top speed is determined by your "confidence level." The more stunts you pull off, the higher your confidence level and the faster you can streak. Confidence erodes over time (tell me about it), and wiping out will take it down completely. In order to stay competitive, you've got to keep your speed up and therefore you need to do a few flips and turns every so often.

You can choose from 10 different streakers and race on 12 different courses. Remember the suicide courses in Jet Moto? Well, they're back! Along with the normal circuits, there are quite a few suicide courses that send you racing head on into the competition. Environments include an amusement park, graveyard, castle, prison, sewer, and freeway. New and harder courses are opened up by finishing with the highest points in a class.

Fans of the Jet Moto series will know exactly what they are in for with Streak. Racing fans, especially those interested in snowboarding and skateboarding, will also find the game to their liking. While the futuristic stunt racing genre may eventually wear thin, Singletrac proves that there is still some mileage left in it. Streak doesn't break any new ground, but it is still enjoyable.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

COMPATIBILITY

1 to 4
Players

Analog Control
Compatible

Vibration Function
Compatible

92%

**GOLD
X**

MARK

gain STRENGTH.

gain SPEED.

gain WISDOM.



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日本人全部死刑に

ろ。民衆は喚声をもつてし射手これにこたえて銃弾を発射す」

北京でも「日寇戦犯何某槍殺示

非戰

に比毛を食べてもら
人便で効果を調べた。
果、
べた
CORE
九割は血清
試験開始前
ていた。六
をつけるという。

父果を持たせたバナナやB型肝炎を防ぐトマトなども開胃中だ。バナナは子供も好んで食べるので、ワクチンとしては絶好。来年には植物研究の温室でバナナワクチンが宙を飞ぶという。



ウイルス性の肝炎を予防で
るワクチンの開発が進んで
野菜にワクチン機能を持た
りに初めて成功した。食は
食同源”の世界を切り開き

れなかつたとい

調理も可

が注射による投

与はごく一部。

のもシロツプ状

クチはなかつ

モリタチンは胃

に抗体をつ

てゐる。二



認に重点を置く

*Send chills
down their
freshly exposed
vertebrae.*



From the creators of Tomb Raider and Fighting Force.

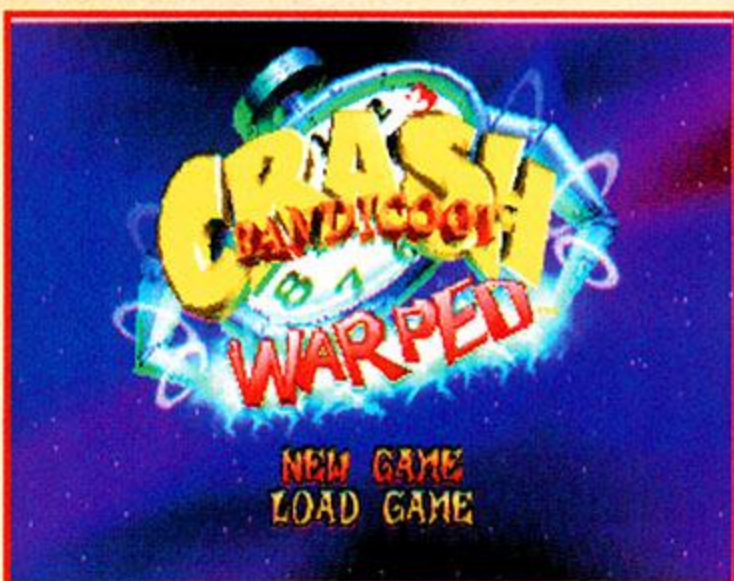
Cunning and wise, yet reputedly merciless. It's the ninja way. Forget code of honor. A vast arsenal of lethal weapons, deadly magic and stealth moves help you do whatever it takes to win. Including raining destruction upon every demon and warlord across ancient Japan. Your quest is assassination. Your obstacles — 10 levels of untamed wilderness and brutal pitfalls — each waiting to find your Achilles heel.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

PUBLISHED BY SCEA — DEVELOPED BY NAUGHTY DOG/UNIVERSAL

GENRE:
PLATFORM
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



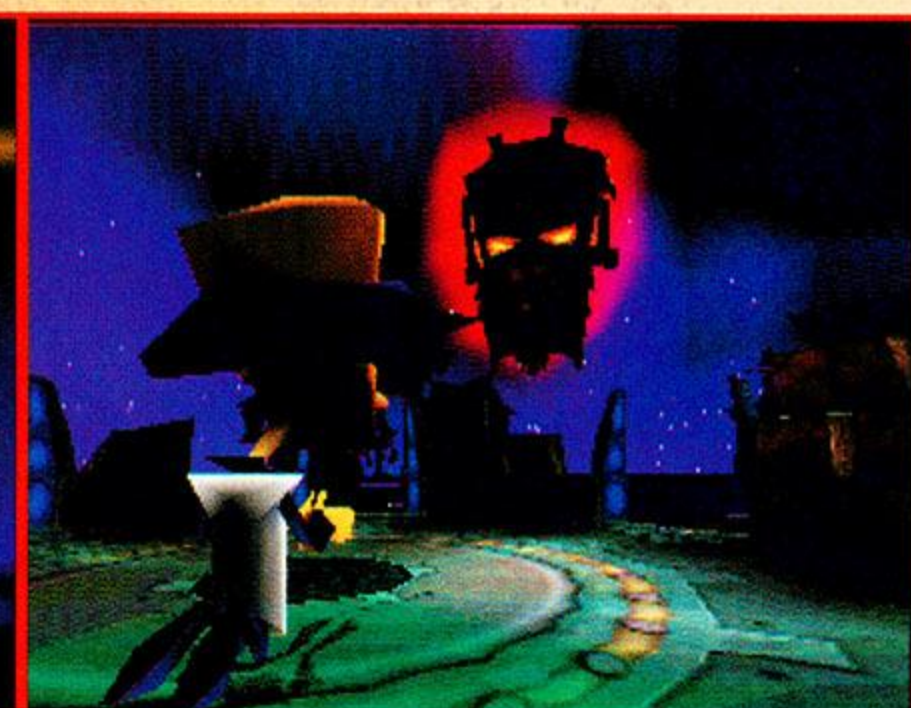
I have spent the better part of the past week putting "Crash Bandicoot: Warped" through its paces and have come away marveling at just how technically superior the Naughty Dog team is, when it comes to getting the absolute best out of the PlayStation. I have also found, through significant playing time, that, while still great fun to play, the third installment in the Crash Bandicoot series offers little that is different or unique,

in the overall structure of the game, from the first two games. But, when it comes to perfecting the gameplay that we all know and love, the Naughty Dogs and Universal folks have come through once again.

The premise behind Warped is that Dr. Cortex actually has a boss that he has to report to: Uka Uka, the evil twin of Crash's life-extending buddy, Aku Aku. It seems that Uka Uka has been freed from prison by the explosion that occurred at the end of Crash 2 and he is one ticked tiki! In order to assure the success of their evil plan this time around, Uka enlists the help of Dr. N. Tropy — to make sure that Cortex doesn't fail. Dr. Tropy has created a time machine, the Time Twister, that allows them to travel through time and find the gems and crystals in their original places. Of course, Crash and his sister, Coco, have access to the machine as well, and they are going to try and snag the goods before Uka Uka, Cortex, Tropy and their minions can get to them. This is where YOU enter the picture.

There are a few gameplay wrinkles that alter the structure of the Crash series in this third installment, beginning with the fact that Coco is now a playable character — in a few of the racing/shooting levels (riding a jet ski, flying a bi-plane and firing its guns, and guiding Pura the tiger and T-Rex down their respective paths). In addition, Crash receives new moves when he beats each of the game's five bosses (there are five warp areas in the game, each containing five levels, plus the boss level). Moves include the Super Body Slam (a carry-over from Crash 2), the Double Jump, the Death Tornado Spin (Execute the Double Jump, then continually hit the spin button to spin and glide through the air), the Bazooka (comes in VERY handy when you are going back through the game, looking for gems) and the Crash Dash (a move that speeds Crash up, allowing for better times in the "Time Trial" mode and the acquisition of Relics).

What are Time Trial mode and Relics? Acquiring the Relics is how you open up the secret warp room and unlock secret levels. It takes five relics to unlock a secret level and you must beat all





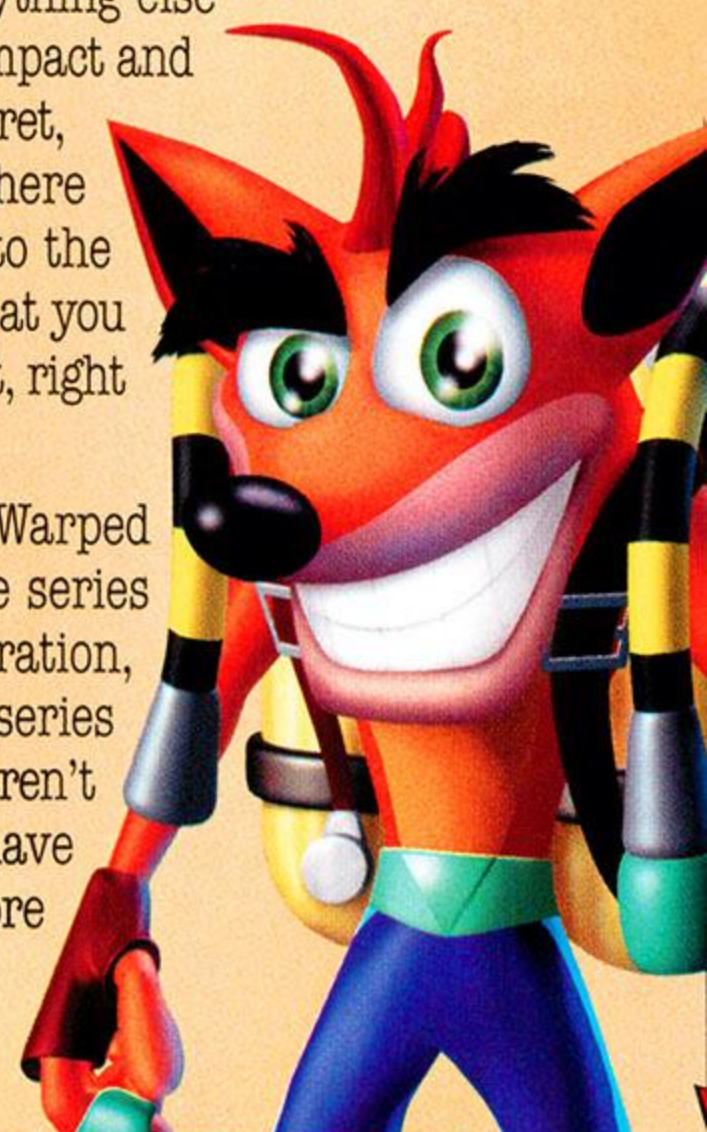
five of the game's secret levels to achieve 100% completion in the game. The way you snag Relics is by beating the posted time on the level for the desired Relic. Each level features three Relics — Sapphire, Gold and Platinum (Hey! That sounds sort of familiar...) and there is a posted time that you must beat to earn each one. Some of the faster times and tougher levels will not be beatable until you've acquired some of the special moves mentioned earlier.

It is this attention to detail that has made the Crash series so successful... and so much fun. By bringing in the time element, the game effectively takes on a two player mode, with you and your friends competing to establish the new standard(s). And these time trials aren't some nice little freebie — thrown in to show how much the design team cared for you — no, sir. The team has been absolutely ingenious in how they have designed the levels for this gameplay element — and the guy who has a plan when he attacks a level is the one that is going to post the record time(s).

In addition, the design team has addressed some of the problems that the series has been bothered by, since the beginning — namely the lack of story-telling and the weak bosses. The bosses are much tougher now, with creative gameplay required to beat them, and the intro., between level cut scenes and the endings are very cool. Graphically, new additions include a bunch of new death animations for Crash and Coco, water technology that is pretty darned amazing (in addition to the jet ski levels, there are a couple underwater, "side-scroll" levels that are to be challenged). The new tile sets, including ancient Egypt, a series of levels that sport a "Renaissance" feel to them, and a new set of future worlds, are absolutely beautiful and help to update an already amazing graphic look. Oh, yeah... the music is up to the series' high standards, as well.

The one problem that the team couldn't address is the fact that, after three games in three years, much of the mystery of the relationship is gone. Like anything else that you spend a lot of time with, familiarity takes much of the impact and surprise of the gameplay away. The secrets are no longer that secret, the hard paths aren't as hard... well, you get my meaning. There isn't much in Crash 3 that you wouldn't expect, as opposed to the first two, where you, occasionally, would have that ONE crate that you just couldn't find — everything in the game is, for the most part, right in front of your snoot, waiting to be discovered.

In the end, while there is nothing in Crash Bandicoot: Warped that can be considered revolutionary, this latest entry in the series has taken the game's evolutionary process to the next generation, while amplifying the gameplay strengths that have made the series the best-selling franchise on the PlayStation. Crash aficionados aren't going to find many surprises in CB3, but fans of the series have yet another reason to celebrate the coming holiday season... more quality time with their favorite Marsupial!



DAVE

PS EXXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

98%

PLATINUM X

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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COLONY WARS: VENGEANCE

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY PSYGNOSIS

GENRE:
SHOOTER
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



A lot can change in 100 years! As a fan of the first Colony Wars, when I tried the sequel I immediately targeted the Navy ships and started blasting. As it turns out, the League of Free Worlds — which you fought for in the original game — has become just as tyrannical as its former oppressor. Colony Wars: Vengeance, set a century later, instead puts you in the role of a Navy pilot fighting against the

League. Switch sides everyone!

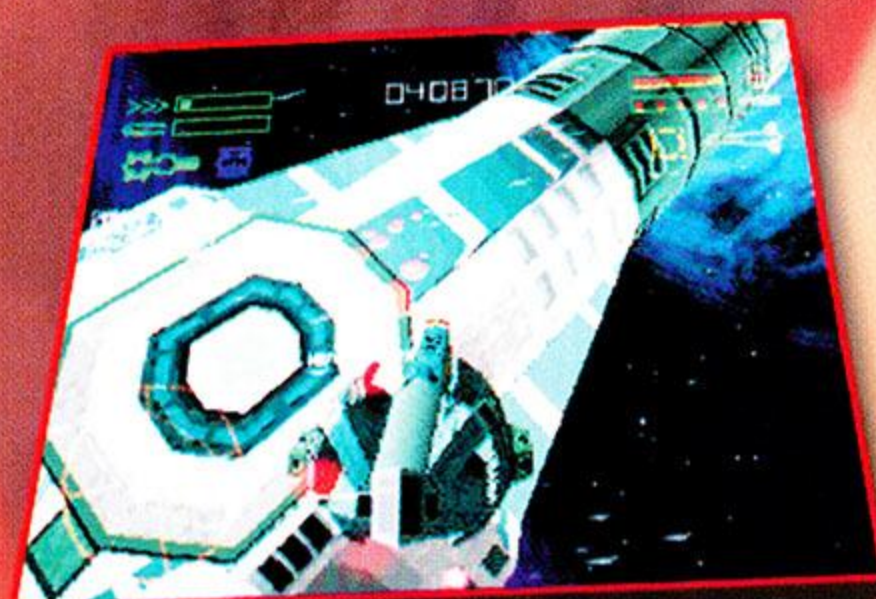
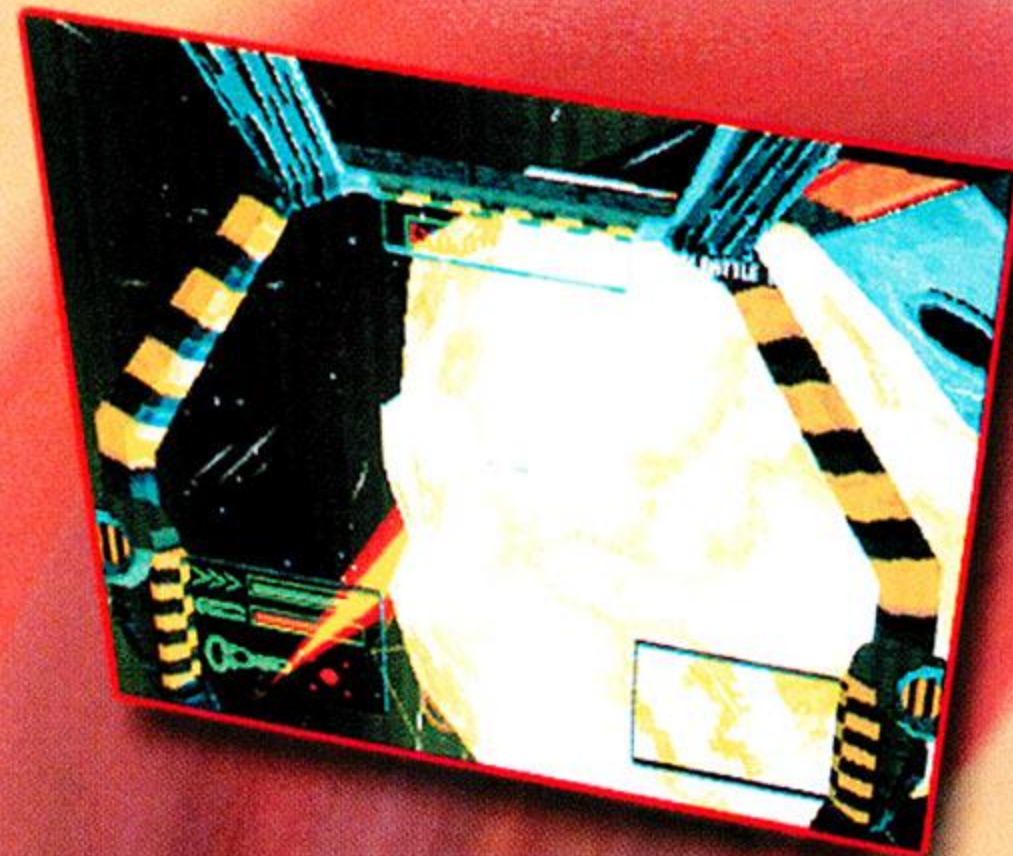
A good sequel has got to include enough of the elements that made the first installment popular, while at the same time expanding and adding new material. If it is too different, it will alienate fans of the original. If it is too similar, it will be a boring rehash. Finding the perfect balance is tricky, but thankfully Psygnosis has done it.

If you've never played the first Colony Wars, shame on you! Go out and get it — I'll wait! Okay. As you know, the game is a science-fiction shooter of cinematic proportions. You are given missions with various goals to achieve — destroying targets, defending ships, clearing mines, etc. — all set to a dramatic soundtrack. Success or failure in these missions affects the course of the branching storyline, which is told through computer-generated sequences.

One criticism of the original game was the level of difficulty — it was darn hard! It took time to figure out your mission strategy and to learn which weapons would be most effective but, meanwhile you had to fight off attacking enemies. Many missions also had time limits which were nearly impossible to beat. Not only that, but you usually had to complete several missions before being allowed to save the game. If, for example, you successfully completed two missions but failed the third, you would have to go through all three once again to avoid being sent down the wrong story path towards the "bad" ending.

First, the bad news — CW: Vengeance is not any easier than its predecessor. In fact, it may actually be more difficult! And, once again, you can still only save your game at the beginning of an act. But don't despair! The good news is that Psygnosis made a lot of other changes for the better.

If you can believe it, the graphics are even more beautiful than the original. There are lots of objects floating in space and photo-realistic moons and planets. Speaking of planets, there are now ground-based missions as well (although you don't get to experience re-entry into the atmosphere — you begin and end on the surface). There are new weapons, different ships, and the ability to upgrade your shields,





engine, afterburner, and gyros with points earned by successfully completing a mission. The cockpit view has been slightly redesigned and you've now got mission-specific gauges which feature information such as radiation levels, distances to targets, and time remaining until you to complete your task. There is even a new targeting crosshair which compensates for the movement of enemies.

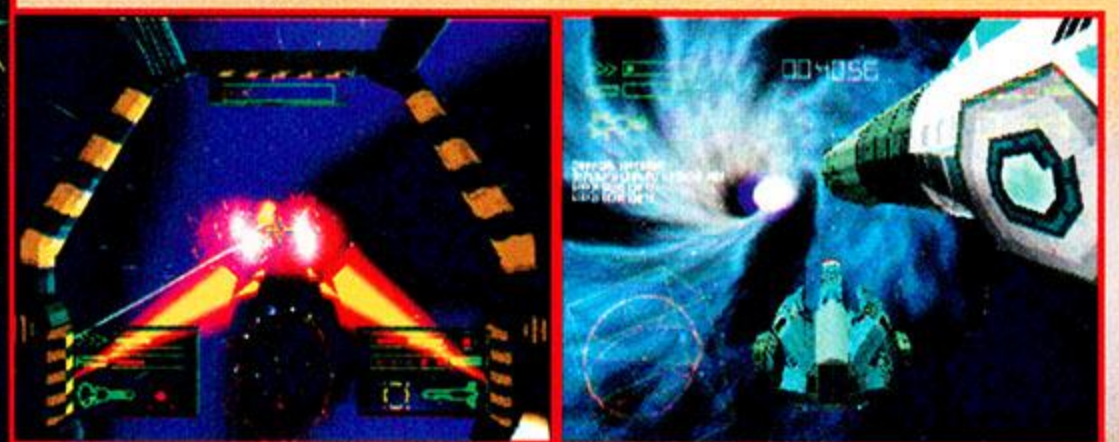
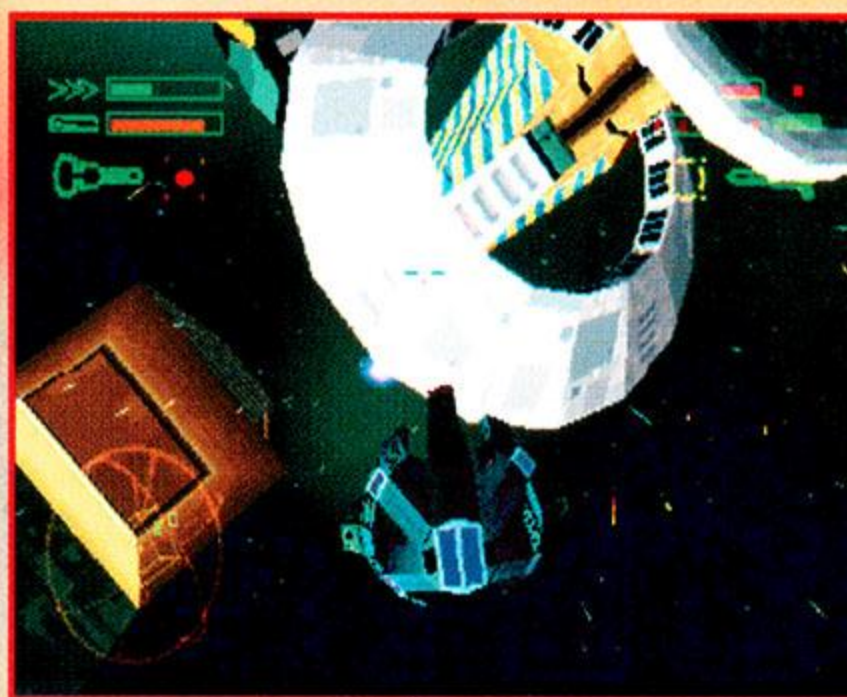
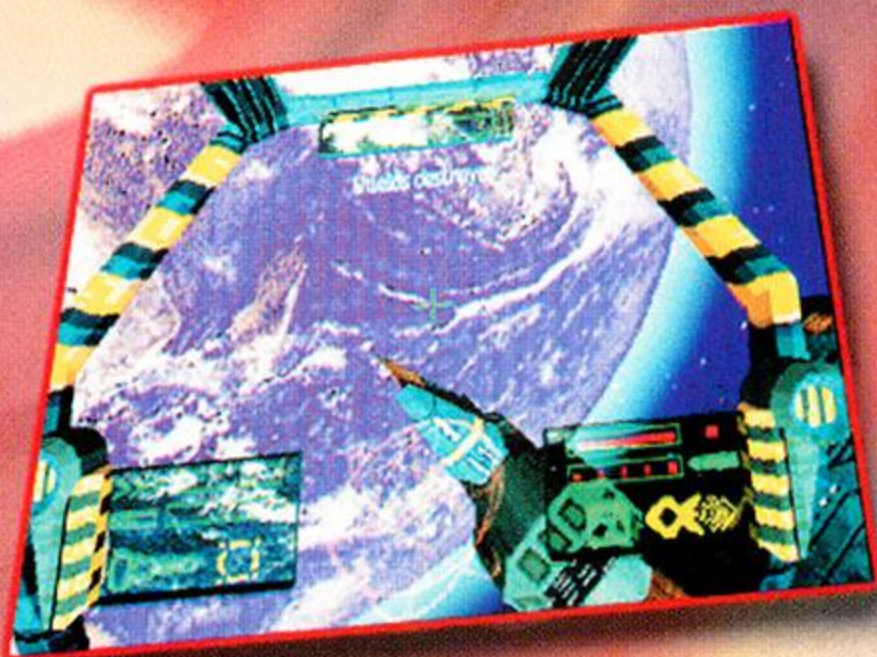
The missions also seem much more varied this time around. In just the first few missions, you'll be required to tow reactors to a jumpgate for disposal, use guided particle weapons to take out enemies from a distance, mine asteroids for crystals (Sinistar anyone?), lance mines from a ship's hull, build a defense weapon's grid, protect pods from being stolen, and defend an assortment of Navy ships. All the while, enemy fighters attempt to destroy you or prevent you from completing your mission.

As with the first game, CW: Vengeance is analog compatible (but now with vibration) and the soundtrack still sounds like it comes straight from a movie. The voice actors from the original have not returned, unfortunately — their less-talented understudies have apparently taken over. What's up with that ridiculous death scream? CW: Vengeance also only comes on a single disk and has 41 missions, albeit long ones, whereas the original featured 60 missions on two disks. Alas, there is still no link cable option which would have allowed for some fantastic two-player dogfighting.

Other complaints? Once again, your wingman seems to get in the way (I'm tempted to shoot him myself). The explosions of the larger ships don't look very realistic, and there is still some clipping when you get too close to them. I didn't notice any flares from the sun(s) that blind you when flying towards them. Brightly-colored planets interfere with your ability to read the map display no matter which of the three viewpoints you choose. The ground-based missions, while a nice addition, suffer from some fogging. There is also no "war book" with pictures of ships and other assorted targets that you can access before the mission. Sometimes you can't figure out what you are supposed to be doing until it is too late, despite the verbal briefing. And, as I mentioned earlier, the voice acting is second-rate.

Nevertheless, these problems do not detract much from an otherwise wonderful game. Like the original, CW: Vengeance does a great job of portraying the vast environment of space and the ability to move in three dimensions. The storyline draws you into the game, and the Dolby soundtrack makes you believe you are truly in the middle of an intergalactic struggle. If you've ever wanted to experience the spaceship dogfighting you've seen in Battlestar Galactica, Star Wars, and countless other science-fiction shows, this game is your ticket.

As good as the game is, it falls just short of our highest rating. It may be too difficult for some, and the length of time required to figure out how to successfully complete the missions will frustrate others. The underlying concept (a shooter) is also not that unique, although the execution sure is fantastic. For once, impressive graphics and sound are not meant to hide lackluster gameplay. Buying this game is a no-brainer for fans of the original, as well as those who enjoy science-fiction or shooting/combat games. Definitely recommended.



MARK

PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

96%

GOLD X

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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WILD 9

PUBLISHED BY INTERPLAY — DEVELOPED BY SHINY

GENRE:
ACTION PLATFORM
AVAILABLE:
NOW

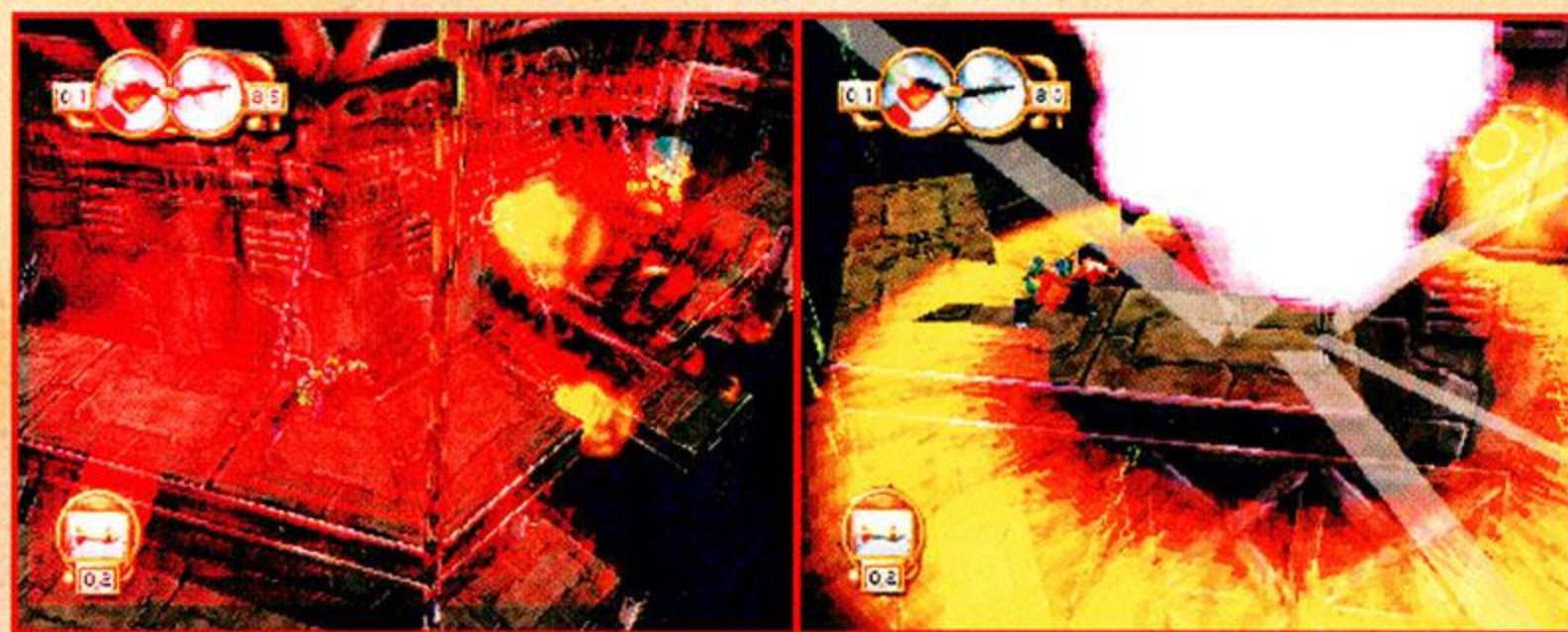


and don't mind my sometimes run-on sentences and illiterate ramblings, then by all means — read-on.

Wild 9 chronicles the adventures of Wex and his kookey-crazy, rag-tag group of friends. Wex has chosen to take on a hostile alien race all by himself. Luckily, he has the ultimate, state-of-the-art weapon: the Rig. This masterful piece of machinery comes attached to his arm and shoots out a powerful bolt of energy that has the ability to temporarily grab and carry an enemy or opponent. Ah, but it's what you do when you've grabbed onto an unsuspecting foe where the real fun starts. The twisted programmers at Shiny have created a plethora of ways you can slice, dice, shake, bake and ultimately torture and terrorize your enemies to pieces. Lock on with your beam and pound them back and forth, cartoon-style into the floor. Pick them up and stick them into rolling spiked gears. Nab one and shove him into a neon sign, electrifying him in the process. Stick one into a pit of fire then watch as it desperately runs around doused in flames. Lob one into the path of a rolling column and see it flatten like a pancake. Impale one onto a bed of spikes then use it as a stepping stone to safely get across. These are just some examples of the heinous pain you can unleash against your enemies, and that's just from the first few levels. And, the more torture you can come up with, the more you are rewarded when you finish a level. If you can come up with enough unique ways to take out the baddies, you'll be granted extra continues after each round. This is a good thing, as the game gets progressively harder and you'll find yourself revisiting the same level over and over, in an effort to move on to the next.

Of course, Shiny has seen to it that there are more play mechanics than just torturing your enemies. Wex can use the rig to pick up and transport other objects, such as keys and boxes, as well as use it to grab onto certain areas and swing up to higher platforms. In addition, Wex will come across other handy weapons such as homing missiles and grenades. There are also a couple of 3D levels where you're on a hoverbike or falling down a long pipe (similar to those found in the Earthworm Jim titles) to keep things spicy.

If you're a David Perry fan, then you won't be disappointed. If you're an action platformer from way back, then you won't be disappointed. If you like a good challenge or are a little sick in the head, then you won't be disappointed. Bottom line, you won't be disappointed. A game worth the wait and well deserving of a Gold rating.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

88%

**GOLD
X**

GREG

半
路
猴
子



Half rock Half monkey All hero

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EXTRA ATTITUDE

GUILTY GEAR

PUBLISHED BY ATLUS — DEVELOPED BY ARC SYSTEMS

GENRE:
FIGHTING
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



Combine Capcom and SNK's art and animation styles, toss in Samurai Showdown's weapons and apply Street Fighter Alpha's combos and fighting system — sounds like a fighting fanboy's ultimate dream game, doesn't it? And you know what? It is. Guilty Gear is probably the best non-arcade fighting game I've ever played. As I've said time and time again, it's nearly impossible for companies to create compelling fighting titles

without an arcade heritage (just look at Cardinal Syn or BIOFreaks) as back-up, but ARC System Works and Team Neo Blood have brought us one doozy of a brawler. Thanks, Atlus, for picking this game up and releasing it in the US.

3D fighting games are nice, but most can't hold a candle to the 2D greats. Guilty Gear is proof positive that animated fighters are far from being dead (as some magazines would have you believe, the elitist scum), but are, in fact, flourishing. When you look at the quality of the animation and art within Guilty Gear, it makes you wonder why other 2D games (X-Men Versus Street Fighter) have had such a hard time transitioning onto the platform. For years, we've heard from publishers telling us that the PlayStation just isn't designed to do 2D games, but Guilty Gear is proof positive that it can be done, and done well.

There are ten characters to select, ranging from Potemkin, the big Zangief-style wrestler, to May, the cute little pirate girl who wields an anchor. You can also play as a little old man with a huge axe, a demonic leatherboy, a freakishly tall doctor, a cute babe with killer hair (literally), an English street tough, a teleporting maniac, a flame-wielding fighter and an icy-cold fencer. Each character has a weapon of some sort, be it sword, staff or sickle.

Guilty Gear plays lightning fast, especially when you consider how much is going on. The screen is full of explosions, flying projectiles and leaping characters. The control is tight, like a good Japanese fighting game should be. During the loading screen, a few of your selected character's moves are shown for quick memorization before the match, but there are lots more to learn. Besides regular moves, there are combos, air combos, dizzy attacks, counters, supers and finishing moves. When the other character begins to glow red, you're able to perform your special Destroy move, which takes the form of a huge attack that will instantly knock out the other player. If you perform this move in the first round, it will automatically win the match for you (which is cool when you do it, but not when the computer does it to you).

Guilty Gear is an awesome game, easily on par with the best from the big boys. It's got both the looks and the playability, when most PlayStation fighters usually only have one or the other. There's a whole lot to pick up, which is where the practice mode comes in handy. Guilty Gear has a great deal of depth; this is no throw-away fighter. Pick it up immediately.



THE
BOTTOM
LINE

93%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2
Players

Vibration Function
Compatible



CHRIS

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WELCOME TO THE CORE



RUNNING WILD

PUBLISHED BY 989 STUDIOS — DEVELOPED BY BLUE SHIFT/UNIVERSAL

GENRE:
RACING
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



Unlike that "other" videogame system, the PlayStation's library has a large gap when it comes to games geared towards younger players. Cartoon-style exploration games such as Gex, Croc, and Spyro appear to be kid-friendly, but often require a level of coordination beyond the ability of most youngsters. Running Wild may help to fill that gap.

Running Wild features animals racing on foot (hoof?) through six stereotypical locales including a city, desert, jungle, and the arctic. The courses are littered with power-ups which increase your speed, increase your size, make you invincible, make opponents tiny, or change the terrain to ice or mud for the other racers (but not you). There are obstacles which must be jumped, tight turns to navigate with the aid of the L1 and R1 buttons, and speed boosts on the ground a la Wipeout. You can also explore courses to find shortcuts and hidden options.

Among the features are an instant replay, a practice mode, time trial, circuit, and a challenge mode which allows you to unlock two extra courses and two harder difficulty settings. In Running Wild, the difficulty settings don't just affect your speed — the layout of obstacles and items on the track becomes completely different. The frame rate is quite fast, and the game can be played in a split-screen by up to four players, with virtually no loss in speed or graphics quality.

So what exactly makes this an ideal game for children? The autorun option. With it turned on, you only have to worry about steering and jumping (although the characters will still bounce off of and through obstacles if you fail to jump them). Younger players might also enjoy the cartoon character designs — Coronado the bull, Mei Ling the panda, Boris the elephant and so forth. Each has his or her own strengths and weaknesses that roughly match the qualities of the animals they are supposed to represent. The background graphics are crisp and colorful and each environment has its own unique sound effects and musical theme.

What about the older players? The four-player split-screen racing, use of power-up weapons, and challenge mode add some depth to the game for the rest of us. If you made an entire game out of just the racing levels from Crash Bandicoot games (where you rode a boar or a baby bear), it would look and feel similar to Running Wild. Unfortunately, this is still not interesting enough to make the game a "must-buy," but at least it is enjoyable. There are no fatal flaws to the game, and my only complaint is the lack of originality and shorter than average shelf-life.



THE
BOTTOM
LINE

88%

COMPATIBILITY

1 to 4
Players

Analog Control
Compatible

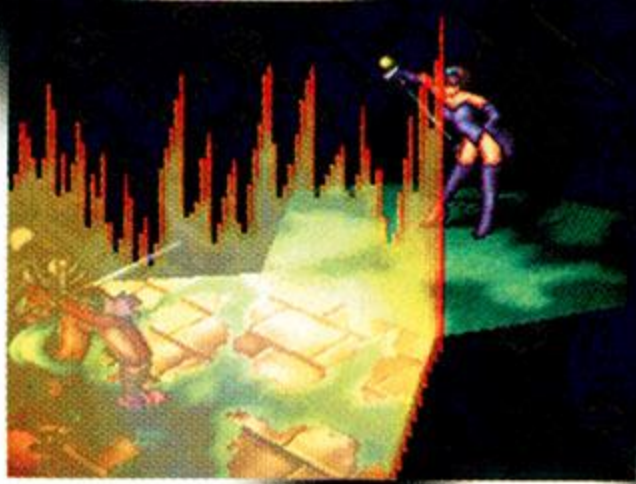
Vibration Function
Compatible



MARK



Choose your Master Monster Summon your

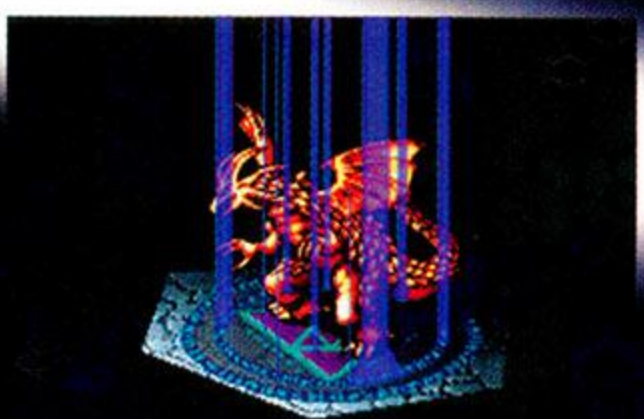


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BRAVE FENCER: MUSASHI

PUBLISHED BY SQUARE EA — DEVELOPED BY SQUARE

GENRE:
ACTION RPG
AVAILABLE:
NOW



Ah, SquareSoft. Must you always try to make everything into an RPG? Can't a fighting game simply be a fighting game or an action game merely an action game, without including some crazy complicated system in there? Take Brave Fencer, for instance. The action parts of the game are really great and a lot of fun, but other aspects either bore or frustrate me. On one hand I really like the gameplay but, on the other, the RPG trap-

pings just get in the way.

You are Brave Fencer Musashi, a legendary warrior summoned by King Allucaneet and his retinue to defend his kingdom from the invading forces of the Thirstquencher Empire. The Princess Fillet casts a summoning spell to bring you to their world in order to save them, but you turn out to not quite be the savior they expected. Instead of the powerful, dashing hero, you turn out to be a bit of a midget with a whole lot of hair, complete with the dreaded snarky attitude that everyone in video games seems to have these days. After being informed that you cannot be returned home until the evil empire has been routed and the Five Scrolls are found, you (reluctantly) set out to save the day.

The action in Brave Fencer is very Zelda-ish. You run around the 3D environments, swing your sword at monsters, collect the money or energy they leave behind, interact with the non-player characters who wander the world, explore the various areas to complete quests and find treasure and magical items and gain experience. Musashi gains new items and abilities that will help him out — at one point, you learn how to use your sword to climb sheer cliffs in order to reach previously inaccessible areas — and his weapons will do greater damage as he improves in level.

Musashi has two main weapons at his disposal, Lumina and Fusion. Lumina is the slower, more powerful sword, which Musashi can use to block incoming attacks or swing in a circle to knock out circles of enemies. Using the Fusion sword, Musashi can "Assimilate" the abilities of the enemies he comes across. Using assimilate on a Red Guard, for instance, gives Musashi the "Paralyze" ability, while Blue Soldiers give the "Gunshot" technique. Other abilities include hopping, breaking walls and exuding clouds of putrid gas (cool!).

Some of the local villagers have been captured and frozen in magical Bincho energy fields. As Musashi wanders the world, he'll come across these diamonds, which he can hit with his sword to break open. Every one he rescues not only extends the amount of magic he can wield, but will then return to the village to



provide services or information that comes in handy during the game.

I want to take a moment to talk about some of the cheap aspects in the game, the parts that made it a lot less enjoyable for me to play. First of all, the controls, even when using the Dual Shock, are too loose. I had a hard time lining Musashi up to talk with people or to use certain objects. The camera controls are also less than spectacular, especially in the village.

There are lots of jumping puzzles that are hard to pull off because of the slippery controls and 3D nature of the game. Some of these puzzles will either drop you in the water and do lots of damage, or simply kill you outright, which forces you to either restart from your last save, or to use a Memory Box if one is nearby. Memory Boxes are convenient, they let you start much closer to where you were when you died but, each time you use one, the game subtracts half of your money! This doesn't seem fair, considering the amount of damage you're always taking. I died several times in one of the earlier parts of the game and found myself suddenly very poor.

Hands down, the worst aspect of the game is the passage of time and the game clock. Brave Fencer has a built-in clock complete with a day and night cycle. While this is interesting to watch, it sucks when you need to talk to someone and find that the shop or house that they're in is only open during certain hours. To go along with this clock, Musashi will become tired as time goes by and will need to sleep. There's a "tiredness" meter, that shows how zonked the little guy is, and once it reaches a certain percentage, he begins to slow down and eventually starts falling asleep on his feet, even during the middle of combat! This brings back memories of ArtDink's creepy cave-man simulator, Tail of the Sun, and the caveman's tendency to fall asleep in the most inappropriate times. To deal with Musashi's sleepiness (what kind of valiant warrior needs frequent naps?), you can make him sleep at any time, or return to the village to rest at the inn or within the castle.

Brave Fencer is filled with the little details that are normally so engrossing in an action RPG like this, but that may be the problem. There are, in fact, too many little details which, combined with basic design flaws, bog the game down and make it a whole lot less fun to play than it should be. If Square had trimmed some of the trappings from this game (losing the day/night passage of time, being able to use the memory boxes without losing money) and stabilized the control a tad, it would have been a much more enjoyable game. There's simply too much happening here to be able to appreciate either the action or the role playing, as the two elements constantly step on each other's toes.

Diehard Square fans are sure to enjoy this game, but straight out action/platform enthusiasts may be turned off.



CHARIS



PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

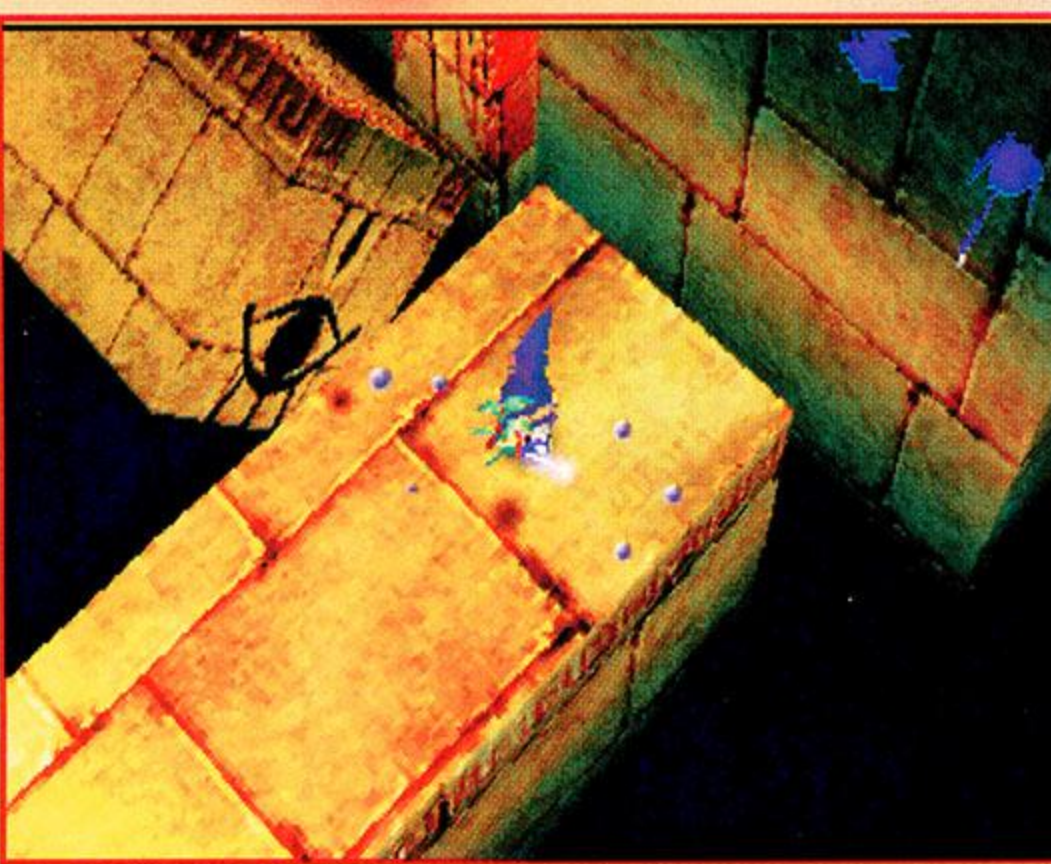
81%



COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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Deploy.

Destroy.

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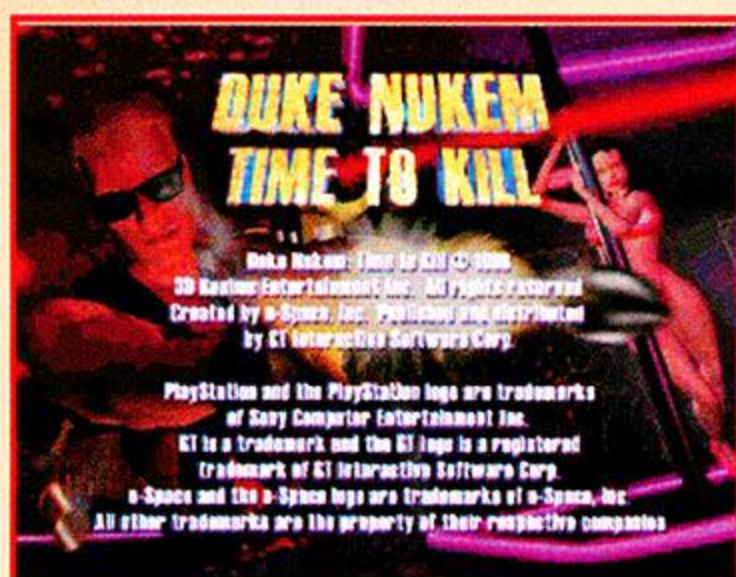


The Sequel to 1997's Action Game of the Year*

DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL

PUBLISHED BY GT INTERACTIVE — DEVELOPED BY n-SPACE

GENRE:
ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW



The first Duke Nukem on the PlayStation was a respectable port of its PC parent. While not taxing the PS to any great degree, it provided hours of solid, first-person shooting action, a ton of secrets and codes and an adult theme that very few PlayStation products have dared to attempt. Now, GT Interactive looks to take a page from Core's "Tomb Raider" series, and developer, n-Space,

has produced a third-person, PlayStation specific, game that is one of the best titles I have played this year, "Duke Nukem: Time to Kill."

Some of you might recall that we featured this game on our cover a few months back. We felt the game showed a lot of potential, and n-Space does not disappoint. TTK plays like a Testosterone-injected, bosom-deflated version of Tomb Raider, with the notable differences being the game environments, intense shooting action, and that Duke panache. The story involves Duke, through your efforts in the game's first level, finding some crystals that will power-up a time machine and allow Duke to engage the alien scum that we have all come to love, back in time to, among other locations, the old west, ancient Rome, etc.

The game is graphically impressive, running in the PlayStation's 512 x 240 resolution and the levels are large and detailed, moving at a steady 30 frames per second. Although the development team has made no provision for any kind of texture smoothing and the game suffers from texture blow-out, the overall look is competitive with Tomb Raider 2. TTK also features the trademark dark side of Mr. Nukem's personality (the game is rated "Mature" — definitely NOT intended for the younger members of the family), which is manifested in some of the more provocative locations in the game (strip clubs, bordellos, etc.), and in Duke's vocal "attitude."

But, gameplay's the thing in TTK and the game has more depth than any prior game sporting the "Nukem" label. Duke can run, jump, walk, climb, move side-to-side, hand-over-hand, tuck and roll, jump sideways, fly (via the jet pack) and swim. In addition, he has the ability to look around his environment in a first-person mode where the Duke character becomes transparent (he can also aim and shoot while in this point of view). Weapons-wise, Duke has got a lot of juice; flame throwers, shotguns and rifles, Gatling guns, dynamite, the ever-trusty Desert



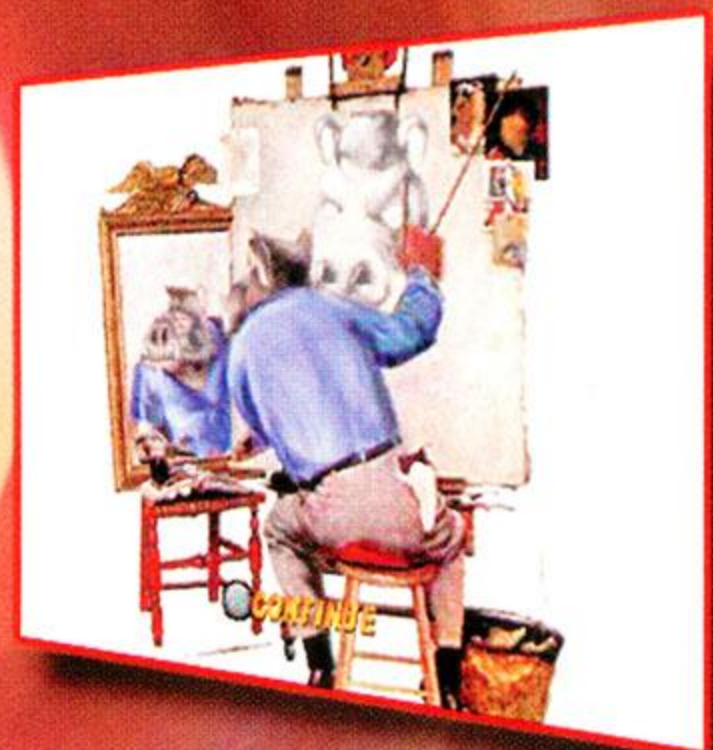


Eagle and Mighty Boot, the RPG, a jet pack and more. And you will need all of them as you look for secrets, chase down alien scum, throw all those switches (the adventure game equivalent of the action/platform butt-bounce) and solve different puzzles. Duke also makes a few costume changes as he moves through the different historical eras — sporting a cowboy hat, toga, etc. If you are at all familiar with how Tomb Raider plays, then you will have no problem coming to grips with all of the moves in TTK. It differs in that there is a lot more shooting action, but the great exploration and platform elements that have made what can now be considered its own genre so entertaining (and successful) are in keeping with the spirit of the action/adventure. Everything moves fast and fluid and it is easy to target your next jump and grab.

Of course, all of this shooting, jumping, jet pack using and climbing would be of little entertainment value if the gameplay environments were not compelling... they are. The level design, from beginning to end ("end" being defined as the Roman time period, where I currently reside in my save game), is tight, interesting and extremely detailed. The old west, for example, is made up of a "High Noon" style town and the caves, water ways and gold mines that lie beneath it. There are a number of buildings that must be explored and all kinds of secret passages. As an example: In the mines, there are a series of huge, electrically powered drills that are used to core and make tunnels. In order to escape the level, you have to find the power source for the drills and place it in the final one you come to which, in turn, drills a new tunnel and allows you to exit. Of course, there are alien scum all over the place that you must shoot before you can start-up the drill. What was cool about this situation, and the way I handled it, was that I wasn't aware that I needed to power-up this particular drill. There was an alien on the other side of it, and he and the drill were blocking the path on the rail bridge that we all shared. I decided to hang on the ledge and hand-over-hand it past the drill. The alien started shooting immediately and I then pulled out my gun, as I was hanging from the bridge, to blow the guy away! Two blood-drenched thumbs WAY up for the hanging/shooting mechanism!

There is no getting away from the Tomb Raider comparison and, although TTK is entertaining in its own right and offers some unique twists on the theme, it is not as long or deep as TR2 and the environments aren't quite as compelling. It is, however, a great second addition to the category and one that no action/adventure fan will want to miss.

And there you have it. Duke Nukem: Time to Kill is an engrossing adventure that goes way beyond the previous limitations of the first-person Duke games to establish a new benchmark for the well-respected series. I highly recommend it to fans of adventure, Duke and Lara Croft. It would have been easy for n-Space to simply rip-off Tomb Raider. Instead, they show a genuine understanding for the gameplay style and have crafted a gem of their own... great effort.



DAVE



PS

THE BOTTOM LINE

EXTREME

99%

GOLD

X

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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don't find this PEARL
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an ENTIRE city,
things are gonna
get UGLY.



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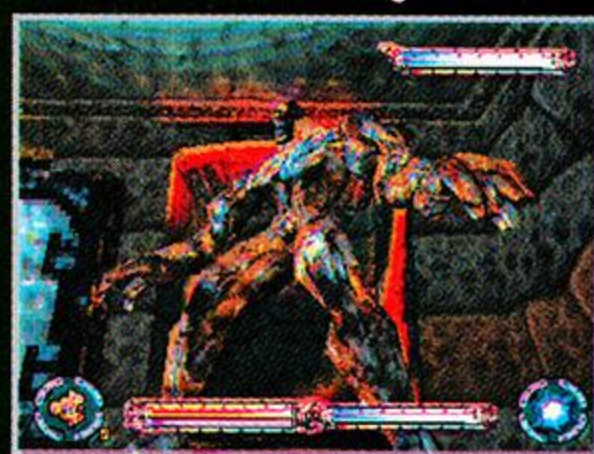
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The citizens of Calli are about to be wiped out by a deadly epidemic. But to find the mystical green pearl that can save them, you must run a suicidal gauntlet through a massive tower. There are only two ways out: Alive and very dead. And there are plenty of hideous creatures in your way who are voting for dead. One thing's for sure, survival isn't pretty.

OR DIE TRYING

- Plunge into the bizarre 3-D worlds of O.D.T. It's part magic, part mayhem.
- Make your way through 8 intricate levels and more than 70 treacherous sectors.
- O.D.T. is an intense action adventure game that lets you choose from four characters — Lt. Ike Hawkins, Julia Chase, Maxx Havoc and Solaar — with different strengths, abilities and special moves.
- Confront your own mortality with endless fighting combinations, including hand-to-hand, weapon or spell combat.

XENOGGEARS

PUBLISHED BY SQUARE EA — DEVELOPED BY SQUARESOFT

GENRE:
RPG
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



As the newly crowned 'Rock-Paper-Scissors King', I feel it is extremely important to let everyone know that living your life through the virtual world of video games can bring you fame, fortune, a royalty (I am the 'RPS King' for pete's sake!). *That's a little public service message I would like to share with you all, having just devoted the last week

of my life to Square's latest role-playing adventure, Xenogears.

Starting off in the shoes of young Fei Fong Wong (friends call him "Fei") in the quiet village of Lahan, you quickly come to realize that there is a massive war going on. Fei soon gets himself involved in the mix and sets out on a mission to search for a reason to live. Though he starts off on foot, it isn't long before the gears (huge mechanic robots) make an appearance. Basically, gears look like something right out of Ultraman — pretty cool!

The story left me a bit clueless through the first 1/2 of the game (that's about 25-30 hours worth). There were a lot of cut-scenes that featured characters I didn't actually meet for a long, long time. Also, much of the conversation used 'code' that forced me to learn an all new vocabulary. The basic plot revolves around the Solaris who believe themselves to be godlike — using humans and other "inferior" races in an effort to advance their own cause. Of course, there are opposing groups and, along his travels, Fei will meet up with a small group of others who will aid him in his adventure and give his life purpose.

Having been a big fan of Final Fantasy VII (who wasn't?!?) I was super excited to have my PlayStation load up Xenogears. There are a couple things that bothered me right off the bat and these things became painfully frustrating in the latter stages of the game. First off, there is a rotating camera view which has been known to work (Final Fantasy Tactics) but, in this case, it simply doesn't. I found myself wandering through an area looking for an object or negotiating terrain for an annoyingly long amount of time. By incorporating action-oriented type objectives (like jumping on little platforms), it took me over an hour to traverse 5 levels — which would have taken me 15 minutes with a more traditional perspective. It was in areas like this where the viewpoint hurts the game.

While a good story is absolutely essential to an RPG, Xenogears' plot





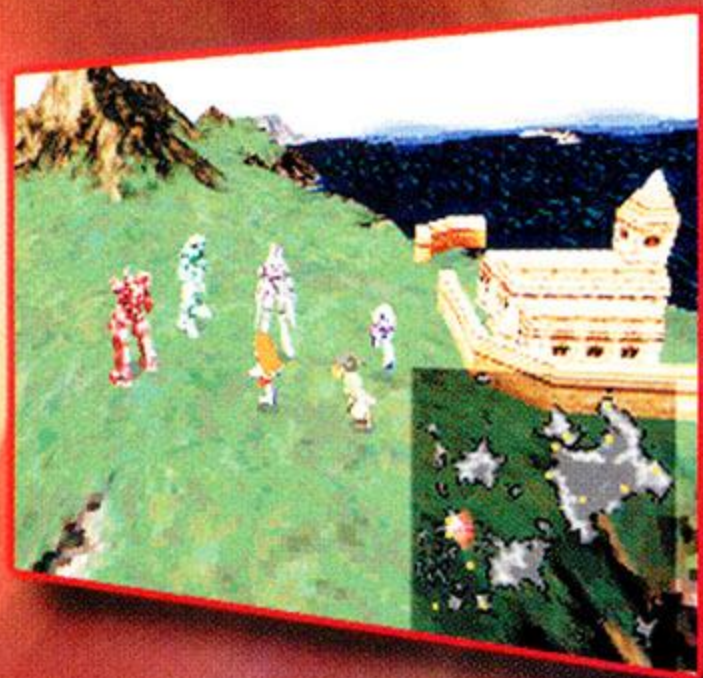
but the story is very linear with only a couple of small sub-quests and a few sub-games.

Xenogears remains true to form, keeping the basic RPG elements with characters in your party going up levels on a fairly regular basis, and a ton of items and attacks to use. Magics don't play too important a role in the game and there are actually quite a few new attributes that Square has introduced that help keep the game fresh, these are most noticeable in the battle interfaces.

There are 2 different types of battle screens, one for characters and one for gears. Both use a time gauge and the action only continues after that character has chosen their attack. This is great in that it provided me time to look at all my options — magic, items, etc. and choose the most appropriate, while not having to worry about being attacked for mere lethargy. For the character battles, a new system has been implemented using combos. These are accomplished by saving attack points and then unleashing a series of deathblows (this will inflict some serious damage). Gear battles differ in that, instead of attack points, they make use of a fuel gauge that decreases with every attack.

The graphics are average. The characters are sprite-based and sometimes look really pixelated. The opening cinematic is well-done Japanese animation and there are two additional animated cut-scenes that will occur in the first couple of hours. It will leave you drooling for more, but you will have a big puddle of goop in your lap before you see another of these animated cut-scenes. Instead, the bulk of the game's scenes are done using the game engine, which just doesn't compare to the animation that we are blessed with in the beginning.

Because the game takes a long time to get into, I would recommend this title only for the die-hard RPG fans out there. The story will seem jumpy, confusing, and incomprehensible for the first 25-30 hours and some frustrating gameplay will also detract from the overall experience.



DILLION

PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

83%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

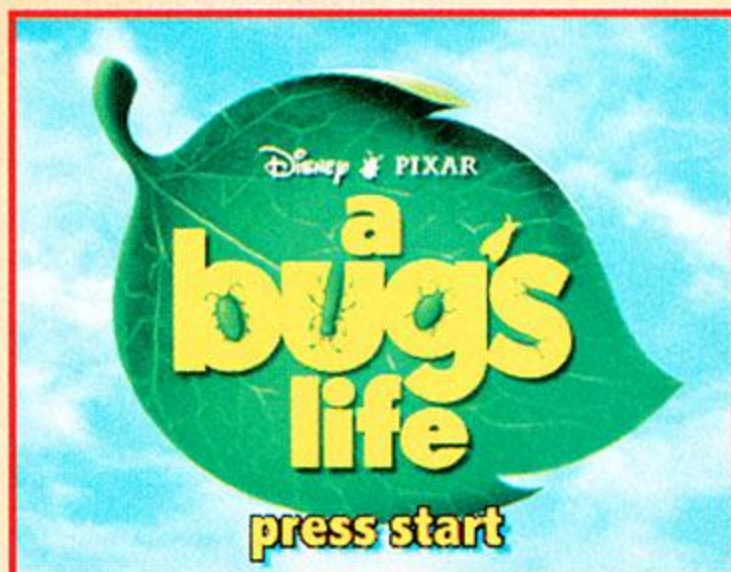
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A BUG'S LIFE

PUBLISHED BY SCEA — DEVELOPED BY TRAVELER'S TALES

GENRE:
ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER



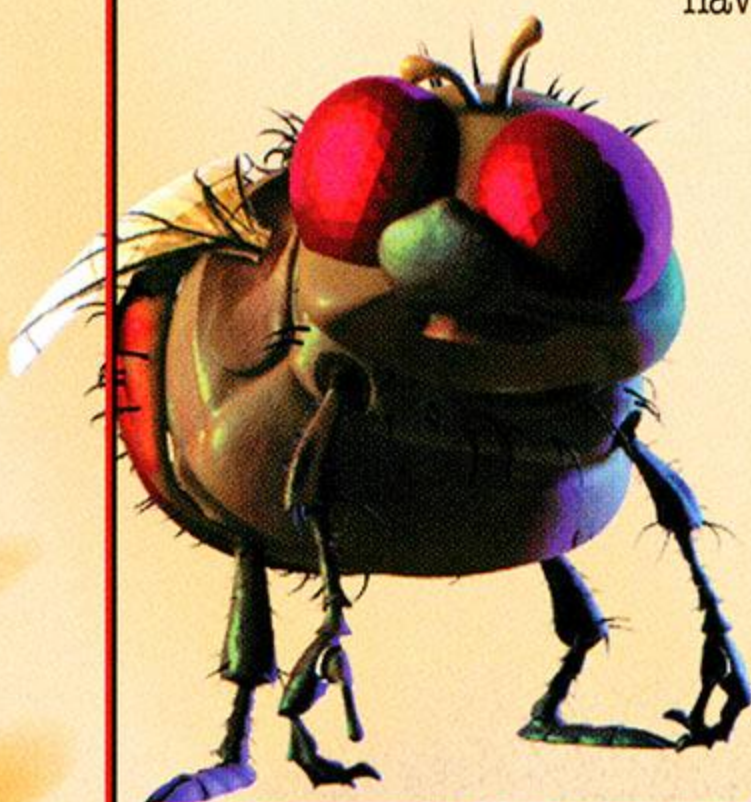
SCEA's "A Bug's Life" is notable for a number of firsts in the video game industry, and on the PlayStation. It is, to my recollection (which goes way, way back) the first time that a game licensed from the film industry (as if you didn't know, the computer animated film of the same name, courtesy of Disney/Pixar) has shipped on the same DAY as the film. It is also the first game on the PlayStation to run in a resolution of 640 x 480 — let alone

the fact that the game runs at 60 frames per second. Well, MOST of the time it runs at 60 fps... A Bug's Life features some pretty notable slow-down, more about that later. The game, courtesy of European technology wizards, Traveler's Tales (Mickeymania, Toy Story, Sonic R, Rascal), and the artists at Disney Interactive, is a beautifully presented action/platform affair aimed directly at the movie's demographic — 8-14 year old boys and girls.

A Bug's Life follows the adventures of Flick, an ant that is out to change his colony's way of life forever. He is tired of the status quo: Ants gather food, grasshoppers take food from ants, etc. In order to bring an end to the grasshoppers reign of terror, Flick sets out on an adventure that takes him from his little ant hill to the big city and back again. Since the only film footage I've seen is from trailers and the clips contained in the game (I am writing this review on October 12, 1998 — the movie isn't scheduled to release for another month), I can only assume that the game follows the plot of the movie pretty closely. What I do know is that SCEA is suffering from an embarrassment of riches. I knew that Spyro, Medievil and Crash 3 were going to be great games... now we can officially add A Bug's Life to the list.

Graphically, it is on-par with the best that the PlayStation has to offer (see the three titles mentioned above) and the overall cinematic quality of the game, including the film footage between levels and the soundtrack and voice(s), is worthy of

having the Disney name attached to it. Flick must jump, butt-bounce, gather seeds and power-ups, fire berries at enemies and use these seed pods that can be changed into different types of flora, to reach higher areas that can not be accessed without them. Some of these pods can be carried by Flick to other locations, where they might be more useful. The pods can change into mushrooms that ultimately can be powered-up to Flick cannons, a vine that grows taller with every green power-up icon that you find (at its tallest, the vine is the most useful pod in the game), a pod



that spits out health (good), bombs (bad), temporary invincibility (very, very good), and one that spits out more powerful berries and that, ultimately, will become a berry firing station that will take care of all the enemies that inhabit its immediate area. The coolest part of this power-up system is that, in addition to the strategy elements that come into play, Flick can change the colors of the pods, thus customizing them to his needs at that particular moment: red for mushrooms, green for vines, blue for health/invincibility, etc. A little low on health? No problem, turn the pod blue, jump on it, then pickup the health icons that come raining down.

And you will need the health. All of the insect enemies that Flick destroys will reappear after a certain amount of time. Extra lives have to be earned, through acquiring the letter icons "F-L-I-C-K" in the level... not an easy task. There is an exception to this rule — it occurs when you find the harvesting contraption that Flick built — it will permanently get rid of an enemy when you hit them with it. This re-appearing enemy scenario becomes more challenging as a result of the necessity of Flick gathering grain, the game's main collectible. In many of the levels, there are passages that will not open until Flick has collected a certain amount of grain — requiring Flick to fully explore the levels. Of course, those enemies that you just wasted have come back to life and you must deal with them once again.

Between building seed pods, dealing with the enemies, jumping, butt-bouncing and collecting power-ups and grain, you and Flick are going to be VERY busy over the course of the game's 15 levels. These levels represent five different graphic environments and do not include bonus levels. But, no original effort is without problems and A Bug's Life has a couple. The first, and most annoying, is the graphic slow-down that is prevalent in the game. Any time that there are a number of characters on screen, the action hits the brakes. The problem that this creates is that your timing on jumps is thrown off. The game, by design, requires that you jump a little early. If you don't, you fall off of the edge of the box, can, etc., from which you were jumping. When the slow-down occurs, making some of the tougher jumps becomes difficult and frustrating.

The other (smaller) problem is with the camera system. While it does a great job, most of the time, of staying behind Flick, there are a number of tight spaces to be found in the game and it is easy to get trapped with your back to an enemy. This short-coming is lessened by the health power-up system, but you will lose lives because of the camera.

These concerns aside, I really enjoyed playing A Bug's Life. Who could have imagined that seeing the world from an ant's-eye-view could be so much fun? Whether you're buying it for the kids or for yourself, you will love the game. With its beautiful graphics, cinematic qualities, exceptional soundtrack and interesting gameplay, A Bug's Life is an excellent holiday buy.

DAVE



PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

99%

GOLD
X

COMPATIBILITY

1
PlayerAnalog Control
CompatibleVibration Function
Compatible

I really enjoyed playing A Bug's Life. Who could have imagined that seeing the world from an ant's-eye-view could be so much fun? Whether you're buying it for the kids or for yourself, you will love the game. With its beautiful graphics, cinematic qualities, exceptional soundtrack and interesting gameplay, A Bug's Life is an excellent holiday buy.



FIFTH ELEMENT

PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION — DEVELOPED BY KALISTO

GENRE:
3D ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW

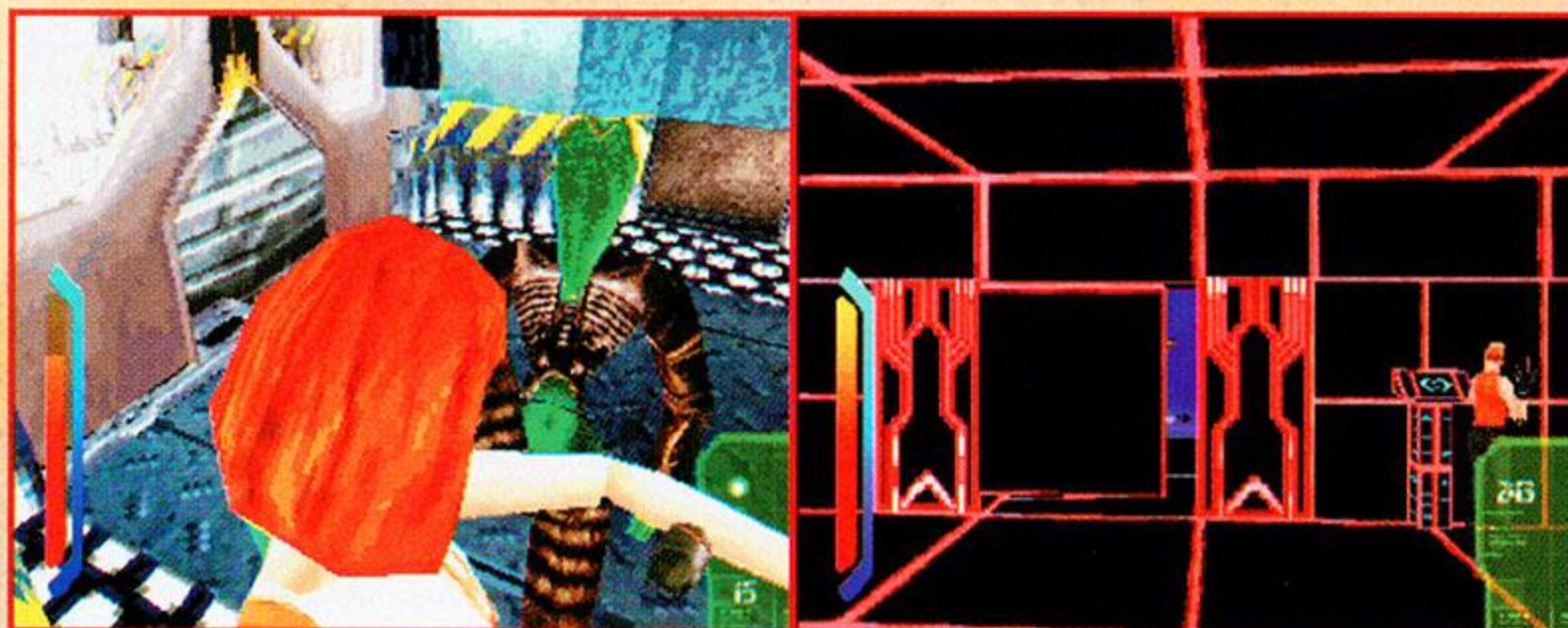
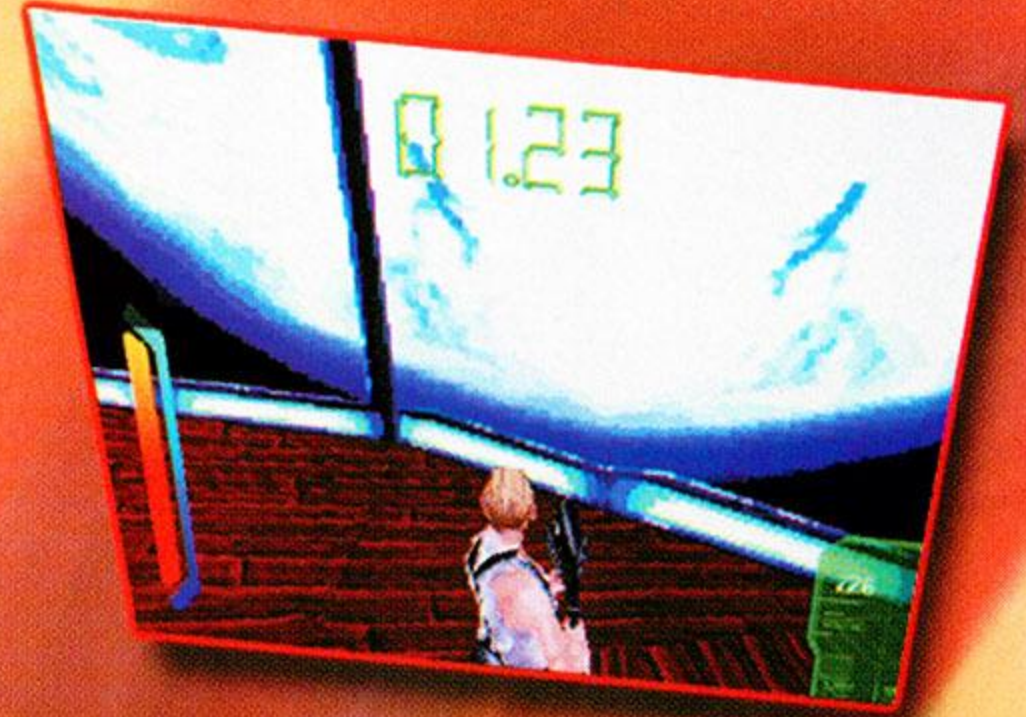


Creatures, so we had big hopes for The Fifth Element.

If you saw the movie (Bruce Willis, Milla Jovovich), then you can probably figure it out that the game would follow a similar plot line — shoot lots of bad guys, travel around crazy futuristic areas, and save the world. All of the normal stuff, but no mention of Bruce Willis; heck, of the 10-15 minutes of video cut scenes, not one of them involves the bald one. Hmm, I guess Bruce and the Apocalypse contract wouldn't allow for his being in any other video game. Oh well, Ms. Jovovich is here, and she is WELL represented, so who wants to look at Bruce, anyway? As far as the game is concerned, though, you can play as either Leeloo or Korben. Actually, you HAVE to play as both of them, as the game is set up into levels that both of the characters have to get through. As Korben, you'll have access to a plethora of special weapons (although still not as many as were in the movie), and the game plays as a pretty straight forward shoot 'em up, with touches of puzzle solving. Leeloo, on the other hand, does not use any weapons, but she does have deadly hands and feet. She can throw grenades and contact bombs, though, and she has the smart-bomb like Psionic power, which wipes out everything and everybody on screen.

The Fifth Element is played out over 16 huge levels, and the levels require you to use both characters (ten of these do) are utilized in two different ways, so you're not just going through the level in the same fashion (or even seeing the same stuff). For instance, as Leeloo, you'll have to crawl through holes to get to areas that Korben couldn't, or you could do the monkey-bars thing and climb over cliffs that are not available to Korben. But, on the flip side, Korben gets to shoot the crud out of everything, and you just can't beat the feeling of firing a couple of missiles into the unsuspecting Mangalores! At the beginning of each level, you'll see a video clip from the movie that gives you a little background for what's about to happen.

After all, if you like a little more action in your action/adventure game, then the Fifth Element has what you want. In the end, Kalisto has made good use of the Nightmare Creatures engine, providing huge landscapes, great graphics (in some levels), tons of action, and a decent story line, thanks to the movie license. In that sense, actually, it might be argued that the Fifth Element is one of the better uses of a movie license in a video game — I would argue in favor of that statement.



THE
BOTTOM
LINE

90%

COMPATIBILITY

1
Player

Analog Control
Compatible

Vibration Function
Compatible



ERIC

DRAGONSEEDS

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY JALECO

GENRE:
BREEDING/FIGHTING
AVAILABLE:
NOW

One of the nice things about the absolute dominance of the PlayStation is the opportunity for smaller publishers to put out totally unique titles that wouldn't be given a chance if Sony were fighting for market share. Jaleco has been on board with the PlayStation since the beginning, having produced five titles for American consumption; the best of which is Tokyo Highway Battle, the most successful, however, was Tetris Plus. None of their previous titles carved out any unique ground in the gaming world, but their latest release, Dragonseeds, is about as unique as a game in the PlayStation library is going to get.



Similar in design to Tecmo's Monster Rancher, Dragonseeds is part RPG and part Tomoguchi. The idea is to breed and fight with your dragon against a slew of others. Dragonseeds uses the standard PlayStation memory card as the primary breeding tool, drawing on data from any and all saved PlayStation games; as opposed to Monster Rancher, that uses a cd; music, video games, etc. Although the breeding sequences are important to the overall outcome, it's the fighting sequences that make Dragonseeds truly unique and a joy to play. Dragonseeds uses a dual command battle system that requires you to enter two different commands to execute your move. Anyone familiar with standard RPG mechanics will feel right at home with this system. Enter two commands and sit back and watch your dragons go toe-to-toe. Like any other RPG style game, you must first train your young protege and then equip him/her with the appropriate weaponry to sustain him in the battles to come. In true RPG fashion, you go through this process with a number of choices to make, all of which affect the outcome in some way. No great shakes here, the uniqueness of this title lies in its ability to draw from stored data to create over 480 unique dragons, not the play mechanics to get there.

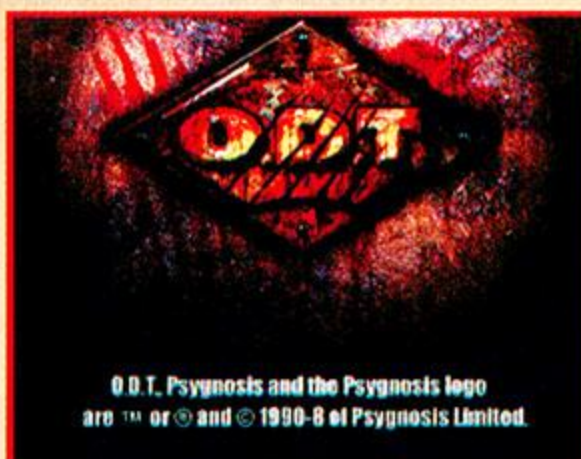
Visually, Dragonseeds stands up to the current crop of RPG/Sim games, although not in the same league with FF7 and its sister titles. The play mechanics are easy to understand and don't require a requisite knowledge of RPG's to master. It's easy to get into and challenging enough to keep you engaged for extended periods of time. You're pretty much guaranteed to never have the same experience twice. While not my favorite category of game, it had me hooked after about ten minutes. While it sounds like I really enjoyed Dragonseeds and I did, it's not for everyone. If you're looking for a little less role playing in your RPG, or a little less simulation in your sim, you'll want to give Dragonseeds a look. If, however, you've never played an RPG/Sim before, you may find yourself a little confused. Ultimately, if you're a little tired of the garden variety RPG/Sims currently on the market, Dragonseeds is guaranteed to please.



O.D.T.

PUBLISHED BY PSYGNOSIS — DEVELOPED BY PSYGNOSIS PARIS

GENRE:
ACTION ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW



"To accept the mission is suicide. To stay behind is certain death." This is the mantra of O.D.T., "Escape (O)r (D)ie (T)rying" — a dark 3D action/adventure game from Psygnosis Paris. Here is the encapsulated version of the story: There is a deadly epidemic that cannot be stopped. The only hope for survival lies in a legendary green pearl that possesses magical healing powers. You must find the pearl to save civilization, so a Captain Lamat assembles a team to go out and

recover this pearl. After locating the pearl, all goes wrong. The craft the team are flying in their search is shipwrecked in the Forbidden Zone. Although no life forms are supposed to exist, something is out there watching, waiting, plotting.

The player takes on the role of one of four players in a quest to retrieve this wondrous gem. Using a third person perspective, armed with four main weapons (with variable power settings) and hand-to-hand combat elements, the player can also make use of up to sixteen spells. Once obtained, spells can be called upon at anytime, with little confusion or trouble and, when used correctly, can produce quick results against adversaries. This brings an RPG element to the gameplay of O.D.T., placing it square (no pun intended) in the middle of the action/RPG genre as well. There are seven levels with each comprised of numerous sectors. Using something called "Artificial Stupidity," enemies will display hunger, fear and sometimes even cooperation. To help the story along, Psygnosis uses attractive CG rendered cut scenes. In addition, a real-time particle system creates rain, snow, wind and other atmospheric effects, in addition to the real-time lighting techniques employed. Virtually everything in the surrounding environments can be warped, morphed or destroyed.

There are puzzles and switches, then switches and more puzzles. Not a bad formula, but it is done rather mundanely here, at best. The graphics are dark and rather rough. And while the animation is not bad, the game just seems unfinished in several ways. First, there is terrible clipping throughout the levels, allowing the player to see secrets that are supposed to be cloaked by walls and the collision is atrocious way too often. Second, aiming firearms is a chore, especially when under attack while nursing a low health rating. And third, many of the areas that need to be traversed are extremely narrow. Considering the inaccuracies found in the control aspects of the game, and the fact that your character can move at two basic speeds (run or walk), this can and does cause major problems. Often times, you will find strange things going on that are not meant to be part of the experience, such as; hovering in mid-air beside a barrel that you are supposed to be standing on, side-stepping off platforms and not being able to see where you are supposed to be going rank among the worst.

Sporting some nice boss enemies, and a few good visual tricks here and there, this game started out as a good idea, implemented some nice features and fizzled in its execution. If action/adventure games are your bag, and you can forgive the misgivings, then I would say give it a shot — at least for its story and interesting spell system. Otherwise, and unfortunately, this is one that is going to the discount counters shortly after release.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

70%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Vibration Function
Compatible

Analog Control
Compatible



FABIAN

SMALL SOLDIERS

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE

By now, many are familiar with the movie titled "Small Soldiers," in which a race called the Gorgonites attempt to hide from the Commandos while trying to find Gorgon — their home. Starting out as simple toys, with computer chips designed to give them pose-ability, it is soon discovered that top-secret military AI chips have been put in their place; bringing the toys to life! In the movie Tommy Lee Jones provided the vocal talent of Chip Hazard, the ultimate Commando Elite — and does the honors for this title as well. The player assumes the role of Archer, the hero du' jour that is charged with aiding the Gorgonites in their quest. Unlike the PC counterpart of the same name, Small Soldiers is not a real-time strategy game. On the contrary, this game is all about action/adventure, with serious third-person shooter elements.

GENRE:
ACTION ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW

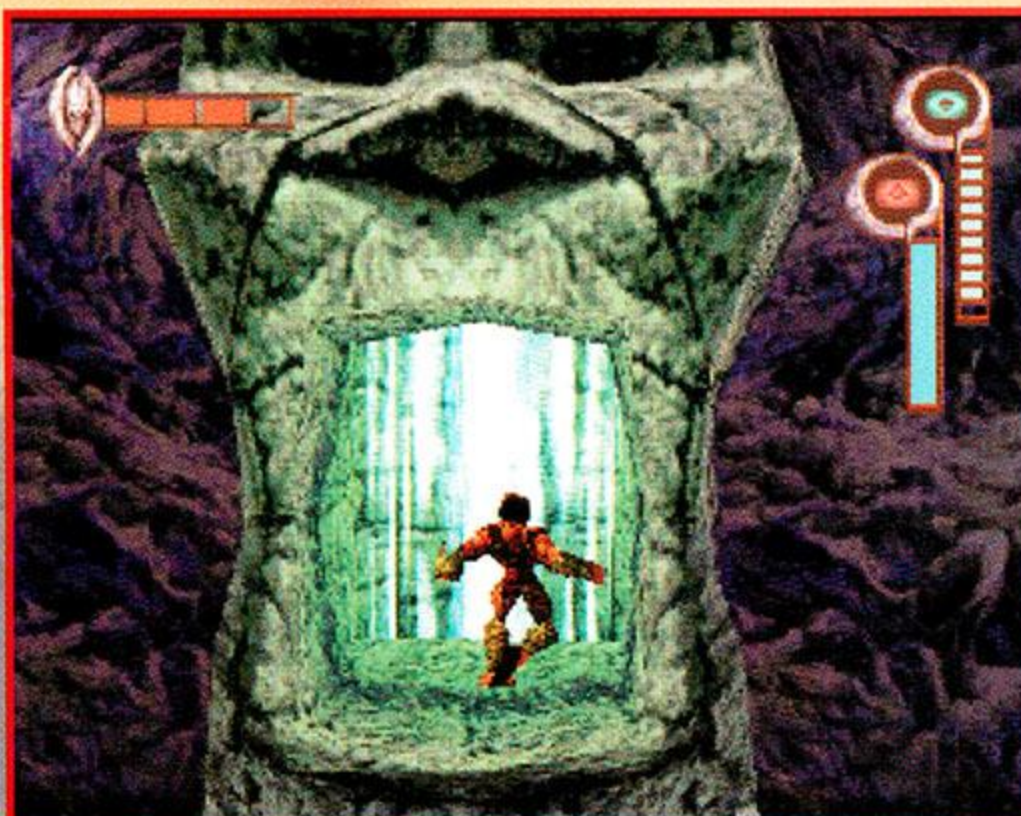


At the beginning of each mission, the player is advised of the objectives via a text menu screen. It is then that the player is set free to accomplish goals and objectives, in addition to finding numerous secrets hidden throughout the game. In the One-Player Mode, Archer is ultimately equipped with upwards of 10 weapons, including things like energy weapons, explosives, projectiles that ricochet off walls and homing weapons. At the completion of each level, you are allowed to save your progress.

In the two-player mode, you are given control of 16 characters, including Archer and Chip Hazard. Touted by Electronic Arts as a "seek and destroy" game, Small Soldiers takes place in roughly crafted 3D worlds that make tremendous use of black fog effects, that fail miserably at masking the tremendous pop-up in this game. The weapons effects are slick and the sniper mode is simple, but ineffective at close range; as it freezes your player (in-place) until conventional firing and targeting is resumed. This makes you a sitting duck — in stark contrast to the game's smooth strafing mechanism, designed to save your Gorgonite rump. Controlling the characters, in general, is not too shabby at all; with full analog and Dual Shock support. The problems come in the form of absolutely horrible collision detection, that will leave you stuck in the oddest of places, at the very worst of times. Frustration will quickly set in, once you find that your character can be almost two (full) feet away from an adjacent wall, and still not be able to walk past it. What were they thinking?

The music and voice-overs are the bright spot in this title. Making use of tribal choir and orchestral music, the aural atmosphere is quite convincing, as it relates the visual setting. In addition to the aforementioned musical success, the choir in Small Soldiers actually chant in "Gorgonite" throughout the game. This is a nicely added detail that further aids in making the environment more convincing.

While this may make for (what sounds like) a good formula; Small Soldiers remains "Small Potatoes." I know that no company ever intends to make a game that is sub-standard, but when they allow a product to ship to market with glaring flaws in the basic gameplay and premise, they should expect to get spanked. Well, my paddle is out and I am calling the first culprit to the front of the room. All jokes aside, DreamWorks could have a salvageable game engine on their hands, if they can clean up a few major issues, before considering giving this game a sequel.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

74%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2
Players

Analog Control
Compatible

Vibration Function
Compatible



FABIAN

ASSAULT RETRIBUTION

PUBLISHED BY MIDWAY — DEVELOPED BY CANDLE LIGHT STUDIOS

GENRE:
SHOOTER
AVAILABLE:
NOVEMBER

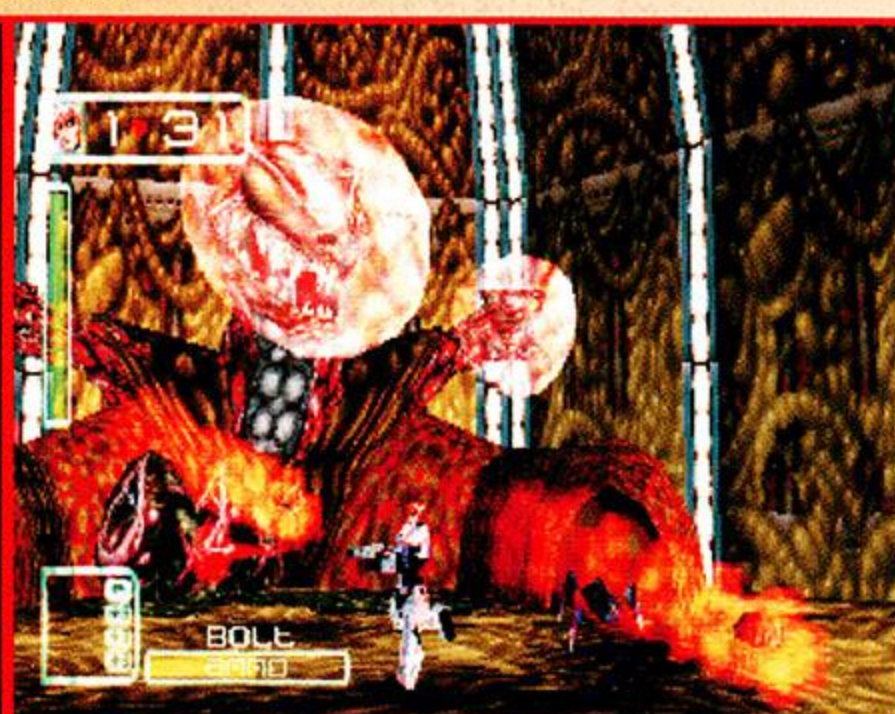


After watching the CG introduction, in which the characters of the game, Major Kelly Doyle and Sergeant Reno Washington, are gratuitously depicted in-the-buff before being adorned with armor and weapons; I can easily say that I knew right then that this was an ambitious title. Taking a direct bite out of Konami's "Contra" realm, Assault embodies a number of

Contra's gameplay elements and excitement. In Contra, circa 1988, the players task was to basically blow the hell out of anything moving. A true "Twitch Game", the player could do two basic things; (1) Fire and (2) Jump.

Enter the 3D era, and despite those of us that feel most of the old-school gameplay elements are still tops, many gamers now are looking for a bit more complexity. Fortunately, Assault, which is a third-person shooter, allows for much more character involvement, control and interaction with their environment; without watering down the basic rectitude found in its predecessor. Much like the level of excitement found in ASC Games' "ONE", Contra is a high-tension, fast-paced, action-oriented 3D combat shooter, with relentless numbers of bug-based antagonists. Teeming with insects and other odd critters, the action starts and seemingly never stops. Bugs are "all over you" so quickly, you will be inclined to have a fly swatter and some bug-spray handy.

The game has four levels of difficulty to choose from: Rookie, Squaddie, Commando and Psycho. You will have to be one helluva player to get through Psycho unscathed, because it is truly mayhem at its best. The game takes place on alien outposts. The player commences gameplay armed with a basic weapon, the Pulse rifle, which can be augmented via power-up items scattered throughout the levels. These power-ups are obviously essential for good living. As one obtains these items, by destroying flying capsules and pill box sensors, the rifle is enhanced to a Shock rifle, a S-Type, and a Cutter to name a few. The Cutter is really interesting, especially when it is configured to fire multiple projectiles. These projectiles resemble plasma buzz-saws, and ricochet around the playing area doing major damage. Shooting certain creatures requires more than just blowing their heads off, because doing so can leave the torso to run around aimlessly inflicting damage on your character when he or she comes in contact with the dreaded beheaded. Assault uses a sound effect reminiscent of the movie Aliens to





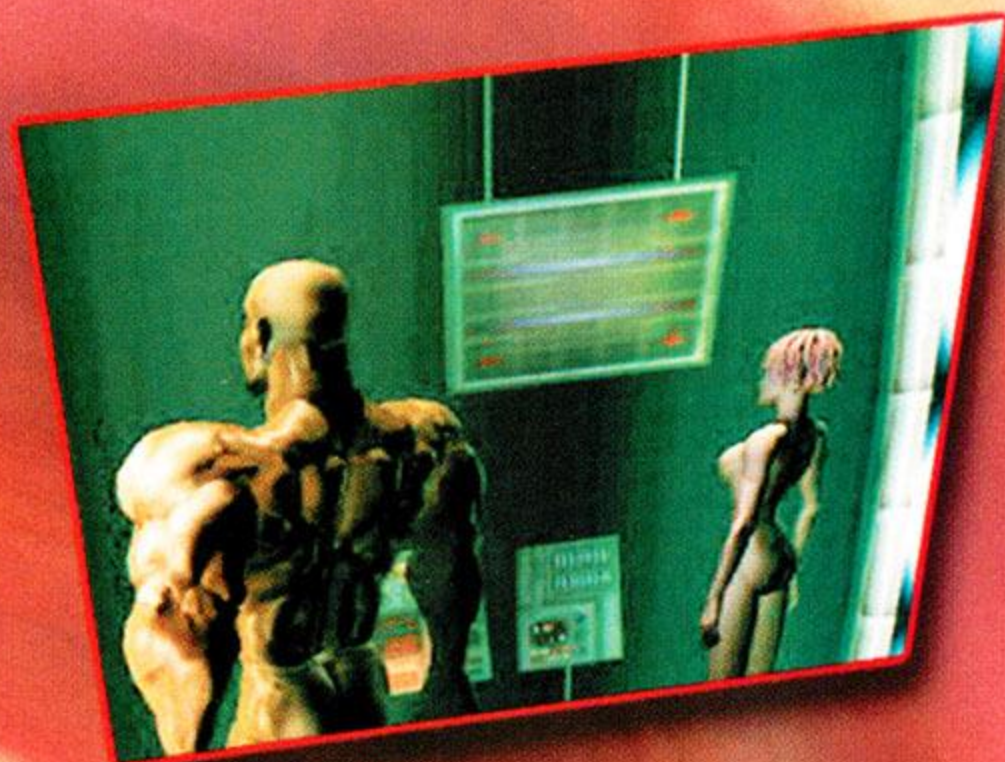
represent when a bug is scattered and splattered. Fragments of your defeated foes fly in all directions, once you have successfully riddled them with rounds. The terrain is made up of platforms, walkways, collapsing walkways, roadways and even overhead conveyances; like pipes and metal gratings; which must be traversed using hand-over-hand techniques.

Handing death to bosses is standard fair, making use of patterns and dodging tactics. Boss

health is represented by a vertical bar graph to aid in knowing when you are close to victory. You start the game off with five lives, and there is a continue feature, as well as memory card support for saving your progress. The health of your character is represented by a gauge that ranges from 1 through (the magical number) 100. Deplete this meter to zero, and you have bitten the dust. Health power-ups are also available (for the finding), and can come in rather handy when one is getting bugged-to-death.

Level designs range from average to amazing. One level, in particular, is a jungle-type setting on a planet overrun by bugs and alien gorilla-like creatures. There is a segment that takes place where your character is waist deep in water, and the effects used to achieve a sense of realism in the water are truly astounding. Speaking graphics, the game is not very consistent in its presentation, with certain levels looking rather rough around the edges; showing discernible seams, and some glitching. On the whole, however, the game is well constructed considering how much action is on-screen at one time. As a result of all this action, there is occasional slowdown, but it does not tend to detract from the gameplay. For my real griping; the text dialog boxes are too hard to read, even on a 36" monitor, most of the music borders on terrible and the view distance is too short. The camera in Assault will occasionally change angles, taking the view from side-scrolling, to three-quarter overhead, to diagonal overhead to third-person rear, etc. This is done at the completion of stages. At all times, the view seems very abbreviated and can adversely affect the gameplay — especially when the enemies are plentiful. In addition to being a great deal of fun, there are secrets to be found in the game, extending the replay value and fun factor it already possesses.

Despite the minor troubles it holds, in the form of graphical and musical hiccups, Assault is a thoroughly enjoyable title. It has been a while since Konami has been able to bring back the magical feel of the beloved Contra games, so it seems Midway has stepped in this time, to reign supreme, with one of the best games of this type released thus far.



PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

Despite the minor troubles it holds, in the form of graphical and musical hiccups, Assault is a thoroughly enjoyable title. It has been a while since Konami has been able to bring back the magical feel of the beloved Contra games, so it seems Midway has stepped in this time, to reign supreme, with one of the best games of this type released thus far.

91%

GOLD
X

FABULOUS



Disney PIXAR

a bug's life

a candid conversation.

The following Excerpt is from a Q & A interview that was supplied to us by Sony Computer Entertainment America. In it, the interviewer talks with Dan Winters, senior producer at Disney Interactive, about the nuances and intricacies of their upcoming 3D action/platform title, A Bug's Life. The game was co-created by Disney Interactive and Traveler's Tales and is being published by SCEA.

Q: How many people are there on the team for A Bug's Life?

A: There are 15 principal members, 10 people at Traveler's Tales and 5 people at Disney Interactive. Depending on the needs of the project, at any one time there may be 25 people between Disney Interactive and Traveler's Tales.

Q: When did you start working on A Bug's Life?

A: Concept work began on the title in August 1997. We continued in concept phase until January of 1998, which is when we started "development" on the title.

Q: So, how does the game relate to the film?

A: Pixar has created a magical world in A Bug's Life. A world in which a patch of grass and clover becomes a dense forest. Raindrops as big as Volkswagen Beetles are perilous objects. The movie concentrates on giving the audience a "bug's-eye view" of the world. The lead character in the movie is an ant named Flik. Flik is a misfit and who can't seem to do anything right. But, as we come to discover, he has very special qualities, which allow him to overcome many obstacles on the way to saving the ant colony. In the game, the player will take on the role of Flik. As Flik, the player will navigate through the same environments introduced by the film. They will face many



EXCERPT



of the same challenges and will have the responsibility of finding the "warrior bugs", defeating the grasshoppers and saving the colony.

Q: Are there any sequences from the film in the game? How do they appear in the sequence of the gameplay?

A: Each level will be introduced with a small segment of the feature film. These short clips from the film will be used as a tool to further thread the game to the movie. By progressing through the game, the player unlocks these little gems. In addition to the end level sequences, if in any given level the player is successful in collecting all the grain, all the letters of Flik's name and eliminating all of the enemies, a bonus section of the movie will be unlocked. This will definitely encourage the player to replay and completely conquer each and every level. The player will be able to view these film clips in the following way. From the start screen, there is an icon that takes the player to a viewing chamber inside the ant colony. Inside this "private screening room" the player can view any segment of the movie that they have unlocked.

Q: How does A Bug's Life differ from previous Disney Interactive games?

A: Where as it is always important for us to retain the integrity of the film, we made a concerted effort to concentrate on game play as our primary focus. A Bug's Life is also Disney Interactive's first, full range of motion, 3D game. The player can navigate Flik to go anywhere they want in search of the many items that will allow Flik to be better equipped in his journey. In wanting to build on the success of Disney's Hercules, we felt it was time for us to take the next step in building a truly immersive, action-packed, free-roaming adventure, where players of all ages will have the opportunity to be the hero, while

being transported into an incredible, magical world.

Q: Are there any aspects of the game that were particularly challenging to the development team?

A: Because we wanted to give the player full range of motion, it was a great challenge to effectively populate the environments with the many beautiful images from the film. Pixar sets a very high standard. They are very strict at creating 3D worlds, stories and characters. It was always our goal to stay as close to the film as we could. In working with Pixar we were able to address these challenges and are very happy with the result.

Q: Why did you make the game free-roaming?

A: We felt strongly that, in order to give the player the experience of seeing the world from an ant's perspective, we would need to concentrate on how we used the camera. In fact, we felt we needed to allow the player to have more control of the camera. In games where the player is more restricted in his movement, it is quite challenging to give the player this kind of control. In our game, how Flik moves through the world and the path one chooses is completely up to the player.

Q: What was the development team's priority — gameplay, realism, scale...?

A: All these things mentioned were an absolute priority for us. As I mentioned before, game play was our top priority. We set out to make a game that would be accessible to younger ages and challenging enough for older gamers. As the idea of the seed/plant structure became more developed, we began to realize we had found a way to accomplish our goal. In allowing the player to have more control of how they navigated through the game, we were able to have features that appealed to all ages. It is always important for us to stay within the spirit of the property we are working with and scale was a big concern, (no pun intended), due to our desire to put the player in the footsteps of our ant hero.

Q: Did the development team from A Bug's Life also work on the Toy Story game?

A: We have been lucky to be able to work with one of the best developers in the world in Traveler's Tales. They are the same development group that did Toy Story (Genesis and Super NES) the game.

(see Dave's review on page 109. — ed.)





GREATEST HITS

OF THE PLAYSTATION'S PAST

A little over a year ago, Sony announced a "Greatest Hits" program that would lower the price on titles that met certain sales requirements. To be eligible for the program, titles have to be available for at least a year and have sold over 500,000 units at retail. At the launch of the program, only a handful of titles fulfilled the requirements, such as Crash Bandicoot, Warhawk, Toshinden and a few others. Well, since that time, the list has expanded greatly, to a whopping 47 titles. These games are now available in stores at the MRSP of \$24.99, with many retailers selling them as low as \$19.99. The games below are the second batch we've shown in this section. We will return, from time-to-time, as more titles are added to the list.

1 EXTREME

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY SONY
VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1 NOVEMBER 1995



ALIEN TRILLOGY

PUBLISHED BY FOX/ACCLAIM — DEVELOPED BY PROBE
VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 6 APRIL 1996



ANDRETTI RACING

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY STORMFRONT STUDIOS
VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 11 OCTOBER 1996



COOL BOARDERS 2

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY UEP SYSTEMS
VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 1997



CRASH BANDICOOT 2

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY NAUGHTY DOG/UNIVERSAL
VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 1997



THE BOTTOM LINE



What Extreme Games does, is take the beginnings of the style pioneered by Road Rash and moves the experience to a much higher level... In summary, if you are buying a PlayStation, buy ESPN Extreme Games. It is one of the best titles that will be appearing this Holiday Season and one of the best reasons to buy the system.

94%



THE BOTTOM LINE



I cannot express enough how great of a game Alien Trilogy is. It had me on the edge of my seat the whole time I was playing, and that doesn't happen very often. It's extremely apparent that the developers at Probe have outdone themselves and have captured and recreated the essence of the Alien movie experience to a "T". So, move over Doom, Alien Trilogy is, without a doubt, THE first-person shooter to own this year.

97%



THE BOTTOM LINE

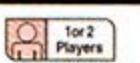


Andretti looks and plays like a dream come true. The race tracks are stunning, the Artificial Intelligence is perfect and the sounds of the engines will have you thinking that you are really Mario (Andretti, that is).

89%



THE BOTTOM LINE

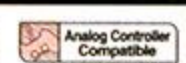
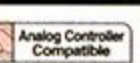


All in all, Cool Boarders is a big improvement over UEP's rather lack-luster first try. The speed is good, not great, but you do get a sense of rushing down a mountain, especially when you switch to a first-person perspective. Aside from a tendency for the polygons to crack, the graphics do their job adequately (you're on snow, it's white). The new moves are a welcome addition, and the ability to customize your own board is super cool and has only been utilized by a few other PlayStation games. If an additional snow-shredder lurks right below the surface of your normally calm exterior, check this one out.

82%



THE BOTTOM LINE



Is Crash 2 perfect? Well, it's sooo close. I know there will still be those out there (mostly in the gaming press) that will say Crash still isn't "true" 3D and bemoan the fact that it still not Mario 64 (get over it... Mario 64 is the only thing that will be Mario 64, and it isn't THAT great); but, for my money and, coincidentally, yours, Crash 2 is just too much game to achieve any other rating than our best. Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back scores 'Platinum' and is recommended as one of the best game playing experiences to be had.

99%



CROC

PUBLISHED BY FOX INTERACTIVE — DEVELOPED BY ARGONAUT
VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 11 OCTOBER 1997



THE BOTTOM LINE



Croc: Legend of the Gobbos is a really fun, really good looking action/platform game — with enough little puzzles, humor and graphic quality to keep even the most jaded gamer entertained. Don't be fooled by the young look to the product, Croc is a keeper and comes recommended as one of the best games to grace the PlayStation this year.

95%



FORMULA ONE

PUBLISHED BY PSYGNOSIS — DEVELOPED BY BIZARRE CREATIONS
VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 12 NOVEMBER 1996



THE BOTTOM LINE



It's obvious that Psygnosis has put together the best racing sim yet, for the PlayStation; my one complaint would be the lack of detail in the backgrounds. But, what makes it really stand out above the rest of the crowd, is the attention to detail found throughout the game. F1 is one of those rare racing titles that will sell hardware. Namco did it with Ridge Racer, and now it's Psygnosis' turn with F1

95%

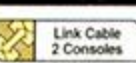


DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY PSYGNOSIS
VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 1996



THE BOTTOM LINE



With all of this destruction, speed, gameplay and options galore, this is one driving game that fans of the category will pull off the shelf again and again over the coming year. Destruction Derby 2, along with the stellar Formula One and Wipeout XL, have firmly established Psygnosis' dominance in racing games. It might stretch your pocket a little bit, but F1 and Wipeout XL are not enough... If you love driving, then you gotta get Destruction Derby 2.

92%



FROGGER

PUBLISHED BY HASBRO — DEVELOPED BY MILLENNIUM
VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 2 JANUARY 1998



THE BOTTOM LINE



If you can tolerate Frogger's brutal difficulty level without throwing your controller through the TV screen, and get used to "leading" your jumps, you'll have some fun; I certainly did (mainly because I derive sick enjoyment from games that punish me). No, Frogger isn't great, but it's definitely playable. Give it a rent and see if it hops across the fun/frustration line too much for your liking.

82%



JET MOTO 2

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY SINGLETRAC
VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 1997



THE BOTTOM LINE



Considering the amazing success of the original Jet Moto, it's pretty much guaranteed that the sequel will do as well and, most likely, much better. The improvements and additions that were added to Jet Moto 2 make it worth owning and a must-have for anyone who thrilled to the original. I hope you have a lot of Christmas cash tucked away; it's going to be a busy Holiday Season!

94%

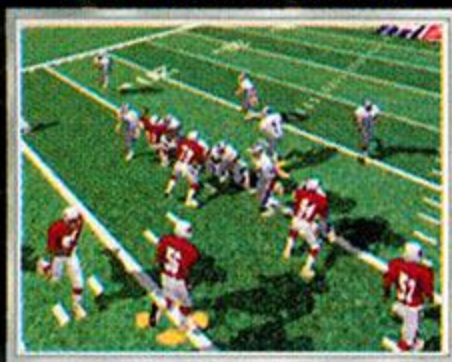


CAVATE

MADDEN NFL 98

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY TIBURON

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 11 OCTOBER 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**1 or 2 Players
Multi Tap Adaptable
1-8 Players

Ah, the final decision... Although Madden 98 is an improvement over last year's version, it is still not enough. Madden 98 scores points for its great shell and glue screens — it still has the frosting, but the cake needs to go back into the oven. When you couple the way too easy gameplay with the now-antiquated sprite-based characters, Madden 98 comes up short in four out of our five rating categories. Its big strengths are an improved passing system, better player control, and an excellent statistical database — and that EA Sports broadcast look and feel.

83%

**ROAD RASH**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 4 FEB/MARCH 1996

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 Player

I'm giving Road Rash a 93% based on the game itself, not on comparison to the 3DO version (please, no hate mail from all you die-hard 3DO owners). The game is comfortably at home on the PlayStation hardware and is a freakin' blast play. I would highly recommend this game to just about every gamer out there and it still reigns as one of my number one favorite game of all time.

93%

**NEED FOR SPEED**

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 5 APRIL 1996

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 or 2 Players

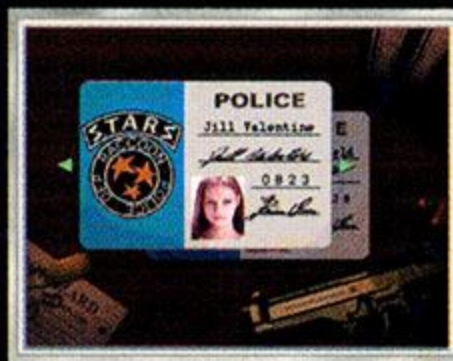
No brainer here... Need for Speed is the best racing game on a platform known for its racing titles. It offers the best variety of tracks and vehicles, graphics that, while not as detailed as those in Ridge Racer, are fast and beautiful, car physics that are the most realistic you will find and gameplay that is unchallenged by any of the other contenders. Racing fans should not hesitate to purchase this game. It will give hours and hours of enjoyment and, if you are like me, impact your social life like no racing game before it.

94%

**RESIDENT EVIL: DC**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 12 NOVEMBER 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 Player

If you've never played Resident Evil before, you should absolutely, positively buy this classic action/adventure game (and that's what my rating reflects, putting this game in the Platinum X category where it's long belonged). If you've already played the original, I don't see a reason to buy it, unless you're a HUGE fan, or just have to have the vibration feature and don't mind laying down the extra bucks for what is essentially a RE2 promotional package.

98%

**NEED FOR SPEED 2**

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 7 JUNE 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**1 or 2 Players
Analog Controller Compatible

...So you thought driving that Lamborghini Diablo Vt and Ferrari 512TR was pretty fun, eh? Well, as the group with "overdrive" in their name used to sing — you ain't seen nothing yet! We've been waiting for some time to get a hold of this title, and now that we have it, we won't be loaning it out anytime soon! Just as Namco's Ridge Racer captivated the office for weeks last month, so has Need for Speed 2. So, in 26 words or less: Run out and grab yourself a copy of Need for Speed 2. You won't be disappointed, no matter what your expectations are. A must-have driver.

98%

**SOUL BLADE**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY NAMCO

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 4 MARCH 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 or 2 Players

Whether or not you own every other fighting game on the PlayStation, Soul Blade is a required purchase, and I'll give the mother of all noogies to anyone foolish enough to disagree with me (unless he's 6'7" and weighs more than a Yugo). The graphics are state-of-the-art, the sound and music are top-notch, and the gameplay is tweaked to perfection. Games like this are why I love and cherish my PlayStation.

98%

**NFL GAMEDAY '97**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY SONY

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 3 FEBRUARY 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**1 or 2 Players
Multi Tap Adaptable
1-8 Players

I have spent the better part of the months of November and December playing Sony's NFL Gameday '97 — and comparing it to both the original Gameday and every other football product on the market. I'm done, there is no comparison. Is Gameday '97 perfect? No, but it is very close and very Platinum. I am anxious to see what Gameday's development team can do next year, graphically, when they have a year to do nothing but look at things like high-resolution graphics and polygon player animation. The "Bottom Line"?... Sony has raised the bar, again.

99%

**TEKKEN 2**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY NAMCO

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 10 SEPTEMBER 1996

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 or 2 Players

With its beautiful 3D technology, unbelievable amount of characters and its spectacular array of moves, this game is a must-buy for anyone who owns a PlayStation (fanatics and novices alike). With that being said, I am happily giving Tekken 2 the illustrious Platinum rating and a score of 98%, leaving just enough room for the possibility of a better sequel.

98%

**NHL 98**

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 12 NOVEMBER 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**1 or 2 Players
Multi Tap Adaptable
1-8 Players

While certainly a nice improvement over NHL 97, the 98 version just doesn't have all the right pieces in place. NHL 98 has got an incredible engine, and with tighter controls, could have been the greatest hockey game ever. Instead, due to the aforementioned control issues, NHL 98 is only the third-best playing game of hockey, which is too bad considering it is such a good-looking game.

85%

**TWISTED METAL 2**

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY SINGLETRAC

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 1996

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 or 2 Players

There are not too many games out there that reach out and grab my attention, let alone hold it for more than a few hours. I could not put Twisted Metal 2 down. Awesome gameplay, awesome graphics, awesome music... It's just plain fun. Twisted Metal 2 is a gem for all PlayStation owners to enjoy. I definitely recommend this title to anyone and everyone, as it is one of the best games I have EVER played.

97%

**RAYMAN**

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY UBI SOFT

SHIPPED BEFORE THE LAUNCH OF PSXEXTREME

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 Player

Rayman is a 2D masterpiece and finds itself right at home on the PlayStation's 32-bit hardware. The unbelievable amount of color and detail, mixed with great old-school play mechanics makes this game a timeless classic. If you don't already own Rayman 2, now would be a great time to go out and snag yourself a copy.

98%

**WCW VS. THE WORLD**

PUBLISHED BY THQ — DEVELOPED BY KOKOPELI

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 6 MAY 1997

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

1 or 2 Players

In the end, WCW vs. the World is a decent wrestling game, but one that tries to dazzle the gamer with tons of characters rather than with solid gameplay. Unfortunately, once you've played the game with all of the characters (a challenge indeed) you'll find yourself putting this one on the shelf for some time. If you're a wrestling fanatic, rent it for yourself and see — you never know, it may be just right for you.

80%



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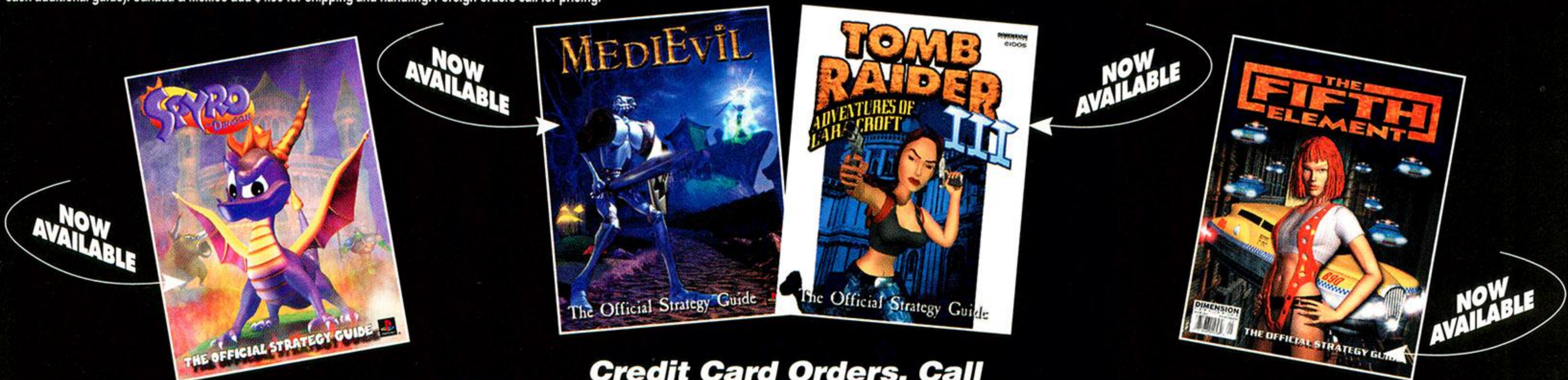
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The PS Extreme Historical Ranking Chart

EXCAVATE is the section where we dig up the last six months of our old ratings and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Gran Turismo	June 1998	98%
Spyro the Dragon	October 1998	98%
NFL Gameday 99	October 1998	98%
NFL Blitz	October 1998	98%
Medieval	November 1998	98%

GOLD GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
MLB 99	June 1998	96%
Parasite Eve	September 1998	94%
NFL Xtreme	August 1998	94%
Rival Schools	November 1998	93%
World Cup 98	July 1998	93%
N2O: Nitrous Oxide	July 1998	93%
Jersey Devil	July 1998	93%
WWF WarZone	September 1998	92%
VR Baseball 99	June 1998	92%
Cardinal Syn	June 1998	92%
The Granstream Saga	July 1998	92%
Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling	November 1998	92%
Cool Boarders 3	November 1998	92%
Forsaken	June 1998	91%
Moto Racer 2	November 1998	90%
Heart of Darkness	September 1998	90%
Kula World	September 1998	90%
G Darius	October 1998	90%
Bushido Blade 2	November 1998	90%
The Unholy War	November 1998	90%

SILVER GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Tenchu: Stealth Assassins	November 1998	89%
Trap Gunner	October 1998	89%
Azure Dreams	July 1998	89%
Rosco McQueen	July 1998	89%
Turbo Prop Racing	August 1998	89%
C: The Contra Adventure	September 1998	88%
Road Rash 3D	July 1998	88%
Team Losi RC Racer	October 1998	87%
Madden NFL 99	October 1998	87%
Kartia: The Word of Fate	August 1998	87%
NCAA Football 99	September 1998	86%

International Superstar Soccer Pro '98	August 1998	86%
Motorhead	November 1998	85%
Thunder Force V	October 1998	85%
Elemental Gearbolt	August 1998	85%
Command & Conquer: Retaliation	October 1998	85%
S.C.A.R.S.	November 1998	84%
Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2 Dual Shock	October 1998	84%
Vigilante 8	July 1998	84%
NASCAR 99	November 1998	83%
Grand Theft Auto	August 1998	82%
Mortal Kombat 4	August 1998	82%
Future Cop: LAPD	October 1998	82%
Activision Classics	November 1998	82%
Ninja	November 1998	82%
Devil Dice	October 1998	81%
Touring Car Championship	September 1998	81%
Pocket Fighter	August 1998	80%

BRONZE GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Spice World	October 1998	79%
WarGames	September 1998	79%
Batman and Robin	October 1998	79%
Dark Omen	June 1998	78%
Pitfall 3D	June 1998	76%
Sentinel Returns	August 1998	76%
Street Fighter Collection 2	October 1998	75%
Bottom of the 9th 99	September 1998	75%
Fox Sports Golf '99	July 1998	75%
Master of Monsters	November 1998	75%
Crime Killers	September 1998	74%
Mega Man Legends	June 1998	72%
Bomberman World	November 1998	72%
Super Cross 98	August 1998	71%
Fox Sports Soccer '99	July 1998	71%

TIN GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Tales of Destiny	November 1998	69%
Adidas Power Soccer 98	August 1998	68%
Bio F.R.E.A.K.S.	July 1998	65%
Circuit Breakers	August 1998	49%

WHAT DO ALL THOSE NUMBERS MEAN?



98-100%

The ultimate gaming experience.



90-97%

"Must buy" games; each carries our editor's seal of approval.



80-89%

Good games, but lacking in some area; for fans of that style of game.



70-79%

Mediocre titles that suffer from some serious flaws. Rent — don't buy.

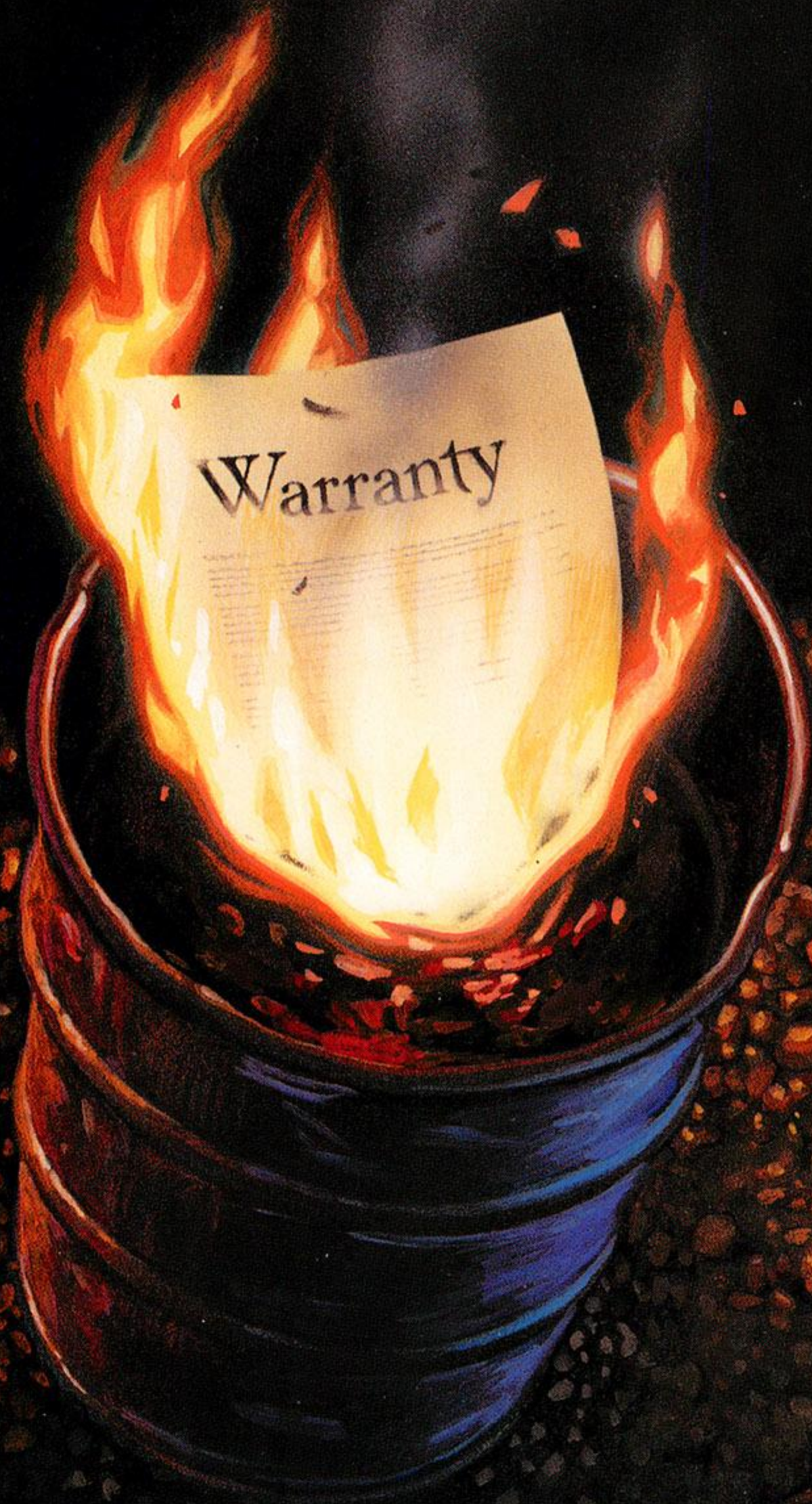


0-69%

Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

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